Title of Session **SESSION 12**	**Usability and Visualisation: seeing the benefits**
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Key words	Usability, Visualisation, Methodologies, Implementation, Research, Information Environment
Aims and objectives	The Presentation Programme within the Information Environment has been set up to examine the interface between users and the systems they use to discover information. Four studies have been commissioned to cover the areas of usability, visualisation, HCI design, and personalisation. The findings from the first two of these will be presented in this session. Connections between the two will be highlighted and the emphasis will be on what can be achieved within projects. For background information, please see http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue39/awre/ Usability has been defined as "the extent to which a product can be used by specified users to achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction in a specified context of use". Everyone building a service that is intended to be user facing will want to make it as usable as possible. Whilst there are many views on what exactly makes a site usable, there are a number of techniques that can be employed individually or together to structure these views and enable decisions to be made. Usability testing can be carried out to great depth. However, it is important to realise that consideration of usability to any level will be of benefit, and the techniques described in this session offer paths that facilitate this. The use of visualisation tools and techniques can also be used to enhance the usability of systems, albeit that these might be considered optional extras rather than necessary. Nevertheless, allowing users to interact graphically instead of or as well as with text provides an alternative route to information and may allow greater understanding and use of what has been discovered. The Visualisation Study examined which techniques might best be applied within the Information Environment and the results of this will be presented. The currently available options and how these are being used will also be described. The view from the Information Environment will be complemented by a report on work that the e-Science community is taking forward to implement usability and visualisation and enhance the GRID services being developed. It is hoped to identify parallels between the two communities to facilitate future development between them.
Audience	All projects with an interest in usability and visualisation (that is, all those with user-facing systems and services)
Style of session	Presentations and discussion