Chapter 10
Conclusion:
Technological Support for Reasoning Communities

ABSTRACT

This chapter provides concluding comments on reasoning communities. Types of reasoning communities are identified and described. Technological tools appropriate for each type are discussed. Limitations of reasoning community ideas are described, and future developments are suggested.

INTRODUCTION

In this book, we have attempted to establish the notion of a reasoning community. Having embarked on the task of understanding what reasoning communities are, we have tried to understand the tasks that they need to perform so that we can better appreciate the requirements for supporting these tasks in a technological sense. We do not start by having as an aim the outcome that these groups reach consensus on an issue. The recognition and valuing of each individual’s reasoning through the support of the reasoning community is the focus of a reasoning community. The central processes in this view are those of group coalescing of reasoning and individual coalescing of reasoning. The product of group coalescing is the co-operative product as outlined. In general, this should take the form of an explicitly structured representation of the reasoning on an issue to which may be attached documents and other artefacts that provide evidence and support reasons. Additionally there may be critical comments and evaluation on the reasoning as it is currently manifested.

Figure 1 shows an overview of the main processes of a reasoning community and highlights the production of the collaborative reasoning product that is used by each individual to support their individual reasoning. At the core of Figure 1 is the collaborative product, typically the artefact document or coalesced representation of group reasoning that is generated as a result of the reasoning community’s work. The figure shows that an individual’s reasoning may occur with or

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without the support of the collaborative product. An individual reasons to contribute to the product and may reason alone with or without using it. The coalesced group reasoning representation is constructed to support and assist individual coalescing and reasoning.

The key opportunities for providing technological support that are consistent with this relate to the process of group coalescing, the representation for the collaborative product of the coalescing and the use of the collaborative product in individual coalescing to individual judgment.

In the last two chapters, we have looked at what is being done to support reasoning in many areas and also what might be done with current tools in a pragmatic sense to support communities of reasoners. In this final chapter, we intend to envisage how technological support could work to better support reasoning communities given that we have discussed the key process elements, the key requirements, the intermediate products as well as the role that natural language, narrative and knowledge representation play within these activities.

The technologies that may be used to achieve a more effective reasoning community will depend on the size and complexity of the community as we have seen. Accordingly, we proceed by considering technological support for different scales of reasoning community.

**TYPES OF REASONING COMMUNITIES**

We have examined a range of reasoning communities throughout the book and it is important to now provide an overview of these, particularly with regard to the differing levels of technological support that may be advantageous. Table 1 groups

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*Figure 1. An overview of a reasoning community*
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