Drupal for Educators and Academics

From Modules to Institutional Cultures

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My Drupal Acad/EDU websites

http://Bohemica.com (subject info, community…)

http://GlottalStart.com (social networking in language education dream - see http://TuiT.glottalstart.com)

http://Research.EDU.uea.ac.uk ("VRE", departmental web)

http://eut.uea.ac.uk (information sharing)

http://childrenasdecisionmakers.org (research project)

http://careers.uea.ac.uk/showcase (event support)

http://CADAAD.org (community, eJournal)

http://PragueLinguistics.org (multilingual, association)

http://CogLing.info (in Czech, supporting book)

http://ConceptualMetaphor.net (subject info)

http://philblog.uea.ac.uk, HermeneuticHeretic.net (Wordpress blogs)

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Other Acad/Edu Webs with Drupal

- Huitalk http://www.huitalk.com
- University of Calgary (http://www.ucalgary.ca)
- http://www.camot.net (research)
- http://research.yale.edu/swahili/learn
- http://nasacolab.org
- http://anthropology.net (Now Wordpress?)

Drupal's big GAP!

- Drupal is great for massive projects (MTV, Sony, Mothersclick, Greenpeace…)
- Drupal is great for small(ish) personal or single project sites (http://info.ulrich-schrader.de)
- Drupal falls short for small organizations such as schools, departments or small associations with no budget for continuous website support
- This is not a technical problem but rather an institutional problem; institutions need to change perspective and processes but Drupal community should be aware of the gap

The ‘truth’ about education

- **Sectors:** Public/Private, Primary/Secondary/Higher/Further, Formal/Non-formal, Small/Large, Face-to-face/Distance
- **Stakeholders:** Students, Teachers, School administrators, Parents, Employers, Alumni
- **Materials:** Textbooks, Audio/Visual, Interactive, Realia, Tests
- **Processes:** Learning, Teaching, Studying, (Memorization, Projects, Case studies, etc.), Testing, Examination, Portfolio building, Mentoring, Socialization, Transitions, Logistics (scheduling, fees, HR, Privacy, …)

Problems to solve

- Present school
- Provide a “Virtual Learning Environment”
  - Set assignments
  - Create materials and tests
  - Communicate with others
- Administer courses, students, classrooms, timtabling
- Maintain privacy of students
- Involve others (e.g. parents)

Drupal's response

- Direct
  - DrupalEd Distro (http://drupaled.org)
  - PhpEdu (http://www.phpedu.org.uk)
  - Quiz, Gradebook module
  - Moodle integration (???)
  - Old modules: Vocab, Question-and-Answer Sets, FlashCard
- Indirect
  - Buddy list, User points, Facebook integration?
  - Organic groups, Bio/Nodeprofile
  - Views/CCK (databases), Access control (privacy), Taxonomy, Book module

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Drupal’s competition

- VLEs:
  - Blackboard/WebCT
  - Moodle, ATutor, LearnNI
  - **Digication**
  - “TuiT.glottalstart.com” (available for porting)
- Testing systems (questionmark, …)
- Others CMSs
- Social networking

Where Drupal falls short

- No (comprehensive/mature) modules for…
  - Creation of interactive materials (Quiz)
  - Assignment workflow (PHPEdu)
  - Classroom management (OG, distros)
  - Testing (standards compliance) (Quiz)
  - Privacy assurances (Access control)
- Mature Drupal shops dedicated to education (growing: e.g. Funnymonkey, Palantir)
- Small/Big dilemma

The truth about academia

- **Research** (surveys, interviews, experiments, thinking, literature review,)
- **Research communication** (Establishing networks of trust (see philosophy of science))
  - Publication (books, journals, ejournals, websites)
  - Peer review (journals, conferences)
  - Conferences
  - Projects
- **Institutional logistics** (departments, teaching, supervision, communication)

Academia's Paradox

- HTML (the web) was invented by academics for sharing and collaboration and it was OK but not all that good at it (a bit better than Gopher)
- Now that the internet is the web and it's getting better all the time at sharing (social networking is academia's bread and butter); academics are still living in the world of static HTML and email

Problems to solve

- Organize conferences
- Share bibliographies
- Anonymously peer review submissions
- Share writing
- Annotate
- Build communities
- Focus fragmentation
- User resistance
- Multi-institutional collaboration

Key modules for Academics

http://groups.drupal.org/drupal-research-and-academia

- Biblio, OAI-PMH, Z39.50 Search
- eJournal (CCK/Views)
- Footnotes, Table of Contents
- Conference / Conference distro
- Event/Calendar/Signup/Schedule
- Similar entries
- *Other modules:* CCK/Views, Organic Groups, Wiki, Book, Fileshare/Filebrowser, MySite

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What more could Drupal do

- **Modules:**
  - collaborative writing projects, automatic pagination, better WYSIWIG integration
  - OG2List, email integration (not all web)
  - blogging projects
  - annotation/mark up(cf. GPL3 project)
  - Blackboard integration
  - Publish/Subscribe module
- **Other:** dedicated companies targeting universities and research centers

Drupal's competition/inspiration

- Connotea (Social bookmarking for academics)
- CiteULike.org (social bibliographies)
- Sakai (http://sakaiproject.org - Java based Virtual Research Environment – VRE)
- Brochuware CMSs
- Moodle, Blackboard, etc.

My conclusions…

- Drupal's has a lot of potential in the academic / educational space
- An individual or a small dedicated group can implement a 'good enough' website fast
- The edu/academic world lacks infrastructure for maintaining CMSs in general (funding, mindset) and needs 'education' and support from dedicated companies

Discussion

- Sites
- Projects
- Modules
- Other problems to solve
- Suggestions, ideas, disagreements
- …