DIY Open Source

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- Was the first Leeds University VC
- Developed by Leeds University (Jon Maber)
- First used 1995 (ish!)
- Is a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
  - Lecture notes on web
  - Discussion rooms
  - MCQs
  - Timed release

VLEs

- Most FEI and HEIs have one, eg,
  - WebCT
  - Blackboard
  - Learnwise
  - Technikal
- Can be very expensive!
- Oxford have at least 3

Bodington 1995 – 2003

- Funded by BioNet FDTL grant
- Excellent initial progress
- Support becoming cumbersome
- Little new development
- Why not go Open Source?
  - Retro-fit OS – not best way!

Bodington.org Mission

- Protect reputation
- Bug reporting
- Coordination of development effort
- Multi-platform testing
- Give access to code
- Support developers forum

Resources

- Owned by Leeds University
- Financed by Leeds University (2 years)
  - 50% funding of Jon Maber
  - 1 FTE as support (2 x 0.5)

Perceived Benefits

- Can still use in-house VLE
- Faster development
- More robust due to greater use
- Money stays with Leeds
- In-house expertise
- Good publicity (risky!)

Future Benefits

- Adaptability (eg, JISC e-learning framework)
- Knowledge retention
- Integration
  - uPortal
  - phpBB
  - SAKAI

Open Source Groundwork

- Publicity
- Distribution (SourceForge.org)
- Development forum (bodington.org)
- Licence – Apache-like
  - Apache model – encourages commercial development – good!
  - GPL infective – keeps everything open source

VLE Requirements at Oxford

- 'Proper' VLE!
- Adaptation to house styles
- Structural versatility
- Accessibility (SENDA compliant)
- Standards compliant (eg, IMS)
- Anonymous access
- VLE resources are 'real URLs'

Benefits to Oxford

- Cost
  - 'Major player' system
    - £20,000+ per year, 8 Sun SPARCs, Solaris, Oracle
  - Bodington
    - 1 PC, Linux, Postgres
  - Common
    - 0.5 staff developer, 1 sys admin
- Money saved pays for Java developers (1-2)
- Use developers to generate revenue
- Quids in !!

Oxford Revenue Stream

- Can experiment with Open Standards
- JISC middleware project Guan Xi - Shibboleth
- 2 JISC e-learning tools projects
- Further middleware calls expected
- Further tools demo projects expected

Good things

- Bug fixing
- Quick response to user requests
- 'Free' enhancements!
- Community of Bodington experts
  - Leeds University, Oxford University, UHI Millennium Institute, Eton College, York University, Brook Weston
- Many cooks improving the broth!
- Good working atmosphere

Bad Things

- Jon Maber totally indispensable
- Coding more fun than documenting
- New features more fun than bug fixes
- Lengthy start-up
- Pressure for early returns

Summary

- Greater understanding of system
- System more robust
- Open Source mechanisms in place
- Time to drive forward