

Integration of Mahara and Moodle at Stow College

David McDade – Section Leader, Computer Networking at Stow College has integrated two complementary open source learning systems providing a single sign on process to minimize barriers for learners and reduce administrative overheads.

After the JISC RSC (Regional Support Centre) Scotland South and West demonstrated Mahara – the open source e-Portfolio system - David resolved to try to integrate it with the Moodle VLE that he had piloted with some of his students last year. With 10 years UNIX system administration behind him it was a challenge he couldn't resist. His research revealed what he described as *"a pretty comprehensive guide"* to completing the job and the Moodle and Mahara forums provided guidance for his project.



Aware of issues for many students remembering passwords for the numerous systems that they use both for learning, personal and social purposes, David's aim was to develop a system for a single profile to, in effect, be used in two different systems. This would mean that by signing into Moodle, students would also be able to access their e-Portfolio without the need to sign in again.

With the level of server administration experience David had, he had no problem setting up the server to host the applications once suitable hardware was made available, and he was supported in this by the IT support team who donated a server and created a college URL for the site.



David describes the process, *"When you set up the certificates between the two systems, you can add a network server block for Moodle on any course. When the student goes into any of the courses that they have access to, there is a link to their own e-Portfolio."* The system can be set up to go both ways, so that a student could sign into Mahara and get access to their Moodle courses but David has elected to set it up one way at the moment while users get to grips with the system.

Now that the technology is in place, David is shifting his attention to the learning opportunities provided by the integrated system. Tools within the e-Portfolio system include personal development planners, CV builders, with a system to record and document achievement and learning progress. Of particular interest to many of the students on David's courses is the ability to make electronic CVs available to prospective employers that students feel can give them a competitive edge and enhance their job prospects.

Feedback from the IT department has been very positive, particularly on how the systems integrate and the possibilities for future developments. Five members of staff in the Computing department are using the system over 15 courses and other departments are also interested in the development.

Staff are more confident that the technology is robust, with training offered by David and a support system in place to help the teaching staff exploit it for learning & teaching.

Projects and experiences like David's provide important evidence which supports the advocacy of open source software and the opportunities for utilising the extensive knowledge base that accumulates as open source software develops.

www.moodle.org

www.mahara.org

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www.rsc-sw-scotland.ac.uk/