Efficient Provision of Online Collaborative Workspaces

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The Old Way?

• No more email, please!
• Corporate IT issues
• Bespoke software development
User Requirements

• Data storage
• Security/accessibility
• Collaboration and sharing
• Customisable
• Quick to implement
• Easy to use
• $ not $$$$$

Beta Testers
Our solution

- Plone is a platform, requires tailoring to suit
- eResearch Spaces - parts of a single instance
- Each operates autonomously

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Separate Plone Site</th>
<th>eResearch Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provisioning</td>
<td>Complex</td>
<td>Simplified/automatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Lengthy</td>
<td>Shortened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Cost</td>
<td>Considerable</td>
<td>More reasonable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Overhead</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>Almost negligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Dedicated, to suit</td>
<td>Pre-existing self-help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>requirements</td>
<td>resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spaces Stack

**eResearch Spaces**

- Spaces Customisations
- Plone CMS
- Zope / Zope Object Database (ZODB)
- Hardware
- Internet/Network
Back to the use case

- SEMAT Space created quickly
- Template process satisfies common needs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Separate Plone Site</th>
<th>'SEMAT' Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provisioning</td>
<td>Customised process</td>
<td>Copy &amp; paste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Dedicated development</td>
<td>Far less, due to common requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Cost</td>
<td>Funded by 1 site only</td>
<td>Much less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Overhead</td>
<td>Dedicated effort towards the site</td>
<td>Self-managed by Space owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Custom delivery required</td>
<td>Self-help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Dedicated host needed</td>
<td>Greatly reduced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do people think?

Since we started using eResearch Spaces, they have developed into a **hub of activity** for most of the **projects** being worked on in the lab.

Beyond serving as a **collaboration point** for projects, we are also using our Spaces as a **centralised repository** of practical knowledge gained while working in the lab.

We hope that by compiling such a **large persistent repository** of past experiences we can **decrease the amount of time** taken to resolve problems in the lab easily pass on knowledge to new lab members.

-- James McGeachin  
  *Research Officer*  
  *SEMAT*
Future work

- “Checkbox” requirements
  - Allow a user to create their own Space
  - Select what features they want and go

- Improved theming
  - Themes currently reflect base Plone site
  - Allow users to arbitrarily change page design

- Upcoming versions of Plone
  - User self-managed custom content types
  - ...and more.

Conclusions

- Developed quick and customisable portals
- Spaces are self administered
- New sites deployed in minutes, not days
- User training via blog and on-line documentation
- Simplifies deployment of common systems
- Reduce redundancy
- Let researchers get back to what they do best

- Questions?