

**ISC10D043**

**Corporate Information Systems**

**Subject: Web Systems Review**

**Origin: Jonathan Richardson**

**Date: 7 June 2011**

---

**Introduction**

As a result of increasing concerns and issues with our existing web publishing tools ISD has undertaken a range of technical reviews for delivering web content at UEA. The reviews covered three specific areas which although technically separate at present could be brought together under a new model. These were:

1. General Web Content (using Polopoly)
2. Research web sites (using CPanel or outsourced)
3. Portal (Using Blackboard Community System – this does not cover the Blackboard Learn System/ VLE)

In investigating our current systems we have sought to address 5 key areas. These being:

- Improved functionality for users  
Many new web technologies come onto the market and we need to be able to respond rapidly to requests to make these available. In general bespoke systems such as Polopoly or individually crafted sites as used by many research groups are not flexible in this way
- Consistency  
Whether from a branding, marketing or user interface perspective our current systems are disjointed and confusing
- Resilience  
Running multiple systems which require varying degrees of downtime in order to implement changes makes it difficult for ISD to deliver against the higher expectations being placed on the availability of web systems. The increased complexity of running and maintaining multiple systems also increases the possibility of issues arising which affect availability.
- Flexibility  
UEA is a rapidly changing organisation with requirements to maintain multiple entry points to web users. Supporting multiple brands such as UEA London or specific research centres while also enabling cross site searching and navigation require a far more flexible solution than the range of systems that we currently use.
- Operational Costs  
At present the cost of delivering web content is high – whether from an infrastructure perspective or from the time cost of supporting the large number of servers required to support the different systems. This is added to by the costs carried by research products for commissioning design and hosting of sites when ISD is unable to provide the required branding or flexibility of service required by the project.

## Outcome

The outcome of these various investigations is that an open source product has been identified which could combine the three initial areas of investigation so that a single product is used to deliver general web content, host the portal and deliver research web sites. This would have obvious benefits in terms of reducing the management overhead on our systems and would also move us away from proprietary systems. The product in question is called 'Liferay'

In order to further our understanding and enable wider involvement ISD has undertaken several pilot projects. The first of these were a set of research web sites which would normally have been outsourced or run on our non resilient CPanel server. Further details on the sites transferred to Liferay are contained in the document "Evaluation of 'Liferay' Portal Container Pilot", accessible from the ISSC website at: <https://intranet.uea.ac.uk/committeefice/ueacombds/issc/issc1011/140611>. The outcome of the research web sites pilot was tabled at the recent Research Board and was generally welcomed. The board endorsed the approach of investigating Liferay for research project web sites and agreed that further work should be undertaken to take the pilot forward to deliver some sites in a live environment.

A requirement to host UEA London and a new NBS site which required more functionality than the existing systems could readily offer arose during the year. It was decided with the stakeholders to develop and host these on a Liferay server. This work is now complete with the new sites going live imminently.

The web team have undertaken reviews of importing existing content and functionality from the main web site into Liferay. The results of this work look promising.

## Proposals

**ISSC are asked to endorse the approach of undertaking further work to implement Liferay as a solution to single hosting our web presence.**

In migrating content and rolling Liferay out wider ISD is undertaking a phased rollout.

Phase 1: new research websites will be deployed using Liferay – subsequently old CPanel sites will be migrated

Phase 2: the Portal will be migrated to Liferay

Phase 3: Polopoly web content will be migrated (faculty or school at a time as with NBS)

The Web steering group have already discussed and endorsed this approach

**ISSC are asked to endorse the approach of undertaking a phased migration of systems to Liferay**

Jonathan Richardson  
Assistant CIS Director  
June 7<sup>th</sup> 2011