



Investigation into the use of Microsoft SharePoint in Higher Education Institutions

APPENDIX 4

Report of Community Consultation

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Project websites

Northumbria University: http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sharepoint_study

Eduserv: <http://www.eduserv.org.uk/research/studies/SharePoint2009>

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1. OVERVIEW

The community consultation elicited a very small number of responses (7) despite wide publicity in the HE sector. As a result it is inappropriate to draw any firm conclusions from the data. However, almost all respondents felt the impact of SharePoint on UK HEIs had been positive, in the context of web site improvements, content management, document management and information sharing, portals and virtual learning environments (VLEs).

Anticipated future uses of SharePoint were as a platform on which to build services and as a portal. Opportunities for SharePoint included better information identification, usage and management; reduced demand on administration and social networking. To maximise the opportunities SharePoint presents requires the development of new, more user friendly tools and sharing these within the sector by, for example, authentication systems such as Shibboleth (“integrating Shibboleth into SharePoint would be a big leap forward”). Access to expert, especially in the context of SharePoint 2010 “would be extremely beneficial to the academic community.”

Risks included failure/reluctance to adopt such new technology or getting staff to use such systems; project expense, SharePoint site sprawl and movement away from Microsoft applications (e.g. Google Apps). Some of the risks could be minimised through availability of experienced specialists/developers; good programme/project management; governance policies and standards for SharePoint adoption; organisational awareness and sign on to capabilities and initiatives.

Suggested alternatives to SharePoint in the future for the HE sector included open-source systems, Web 2.0, “clouds and the Internet in general “ (e.g. Google Docs/Apps, Huddle, wikis, blogs etc.) and no realistic alternative.

The results complement those from the phone and online surveys, in particular by adding some views on a future with/without SharePoint.

2. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the community consultation exercise was to enable professional groups, institutions, vendors and individuals with an interest in SharePoint in the UK HE sector to express their views on the impact of SharePoint and on what the sector needs to do to maximise the opportunities it offers and to minimise any risks. The consultation asked the questions about:

- the impact of SharePoint on the sector
- the anticipated future use of SharePoint in the sector, and
- a future without SharePoint.

It was widely publicised through the project websites, blogs and listservs of appropriate groups in the UK HE sector with interests in technology and information management (eg UCISA, Association of Heads of University Administration, RMS HEI group, JISC infoNet).

Seven responses were received. The collated data is presented in this report.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Roles:

3 Academic
3 IT Manager/Specialist
1 Other/not specified

HEIs:

5 New university
1 Red brick
1 Sixty

All located in England

4. IMPACT OF SHAREPOINT ON THE HE SECTOR

a) What has been the impact of SharePoint in/on UK HEIs?

6 Positive impact
0 Negative impact
0 Little/No impact
1 Difficult to say

b) How and why?

- *Positive impact:*

- We have vastly improved the web site but also extended it to other parts of the University. In effect it has accelerated the deployment of the intranet within the University. However, while some parts of the University have made extensive use of the new facility others have chosen not to. One of the big problems with this and all other new technology is getting it adopted throughout the organization.
- It is a useful content management system that has the potential to also be used as a portal for staff information sharing. Any changes made to documents are made on the version everyone sees so that the most up to date information is always available.
- Availability of relatively cost-effective and easy to use building block software to allow integration and interworking of web material, documents, access control and work flow, taking information out of previous silos and fileshares and making it more visible and manageable.
- Substantial use by the centre for document management and workflow. Used by our school as the development framework for our Learning Management Portal System.
- Provides an alternate VLE and distribution mechanism for information and materials to staff and students which on the whole will fit better within the technological infrastructures of institutes. Work has been looked at by [the university] to integrate TurnItIn with SharePoint which would enable quality control of teaching material and student work.
- Rapid deployment of portal technologies for staff and students. Biggest problem: inadequate VLE solution from MLG/SLK. This hampers the ability of SharePoint to deploy a complete solution rapidly for institutions

- *Difficult to say:*

- Difficult to answer this question. It depends on which features of SharePoint is being used. For example, as a document management system, it certainly makes a positive impact. But

on data management side, very little impact. A lot of development work is required to bring operational data from various legacy systems into SharePoint. Simple lists are fine, but when you have relational databases in the background, things are not that straightforward.

5. ANTICIPATED FUTURE USE OF SHAREPOINT IN THE HE SECTOR

c) What is the role for SharePoint in the future?

- It will continue to be a “web site server” but in the future it will be recognised as a platform on which to build services. Probably using the development tools that are available and services such as workflow, excel and forms services
- Staff/student portal, developing into team sites for academic and administrative functions
- To use as a staff portal/alternative to staff intranet
- More of the same! Developing into institution-wide web-based integrated portals, searchable knowledge bases and repositories. Integrating with other information sources and processes (e.g. scanned documents) and yielding better and more holistic management information
- SharePoint should be able to deliver personalised information to individuals. Ideally, it should be the only application that we need to run to support general admin duties, essentially it should be the interface to all other operational systems
- As an academic school, we intend to continue expanding our use of the technology, particularly with SharePoint 2010 coming on stream next year.

d) What are the opportunities? How can they be maximised?

- To provide more user friendly tools to adapt pages as you would a website. Currently it is tedious and time consuming to constantly have to add separate web parts
- To develop new tools using SharePoint as a development platform. The problem is that many universities are developing tools (some based on SharePoint I suppose) but it is still difficult for Universities to share work with each other even with widespread use of an authentication system such as Shibboleth. I suspect that integrating Shibboleth into SharePoint would be a big leap forward
- Social networking. Could provide a great VLE platform but technology is not mature yet
- Better information identification, usage and management. Common environment and framework for information. Ease of integration and development of usage of information. Simplified support and maintenance
- If used correctly, it should be possible to reduce demand on admin resources. However to achieve this, proper workflow integration is required
- SharePoint 2010 sounds pretty amazing. It would be extremely beneficial to the academic community if we had access to expert support when we move to this new version.

e) What are the risks? How can they be minimised?

- Getting staff to use the system
- Failure to adopt new technology. There is a reluctance here to embrace new technology

- Project expense can run up quickly, MS changes to technology (e.g. difference in MySites from portal server to MOSS 2007), Specialists still hard to come by - particularly with Educational experience
- SharePoint site sprawl – unmanaged and unstructured information springing up inside SharePoint. Temptation to complex customisation and development. Skills and resources to develop and manage. Dependency on Microsoft and environment. Minimise through good programme/project management; governance policies and standards for SharePoint adoption; organisational awareness and sign on to capabilities and initiatives
- Movement away from Microsoft applications. Perhaps Google apps will provide an equally good framework on which to build applications. Could minimise risks if JISC funded SharePoint support that all university developers could have access to.
- Unable to comment

6. A FUTURE WITHOUT SHAREPOINT IN THE HE SECTOR

- f) What could be the alternative to SharePoint in the future for the HE sector?
- Open-source systems?
 - There are commercial alternatives and there are even some open source systems that, in combination with each other, provide a similar range of services but where SharePoint scores is its integration with other widely used technology. That is hard for competitors to do in my view.
 - 'Web 2.0', Clouds and the Internet in general – i.e. organisational information and intellectual property could just be 'out there' in shared storage, application and collaborative environments, e.g. Google Docs, Huddle, wikis, blogs etc. etc.
 - Movement away from Microsoft applications. Perhaps Google apps will provide an equally good framework on which to build applications.
 - Unaware of an alternative
 - I do not see a realistic alternative.

APPENDIX - DATA COLLECTION FORM

SharePoint in the Higher Education Sector - Community Consultation

Please email your responses to the questions either on this form below or directly to [eb sharepoint@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:sharepoint@northumbria.ac.uk) . The consultation closes on **Mon 9 November 2009**.

1. Impact of SharePoint on the HE sector

a) What has been the impact of SharePoint in/on UK HEIs?

- Positive impact
 Negative impact
 Little/No impact

b) How and why?

2. Anticipated future use of SharePoint in the HE sector

c) What is the role for SharePoint in the future?

d) What are the opportunities? How can they be maximised?

e) What are the risks? How can they be minimised?

3. A future without SharePoint in the HE sector

f) What could be the alternative to SharePoint in the future for the HE sector?

Your role	<input type="checkbox"/> Academic <input type="checkbox"/> Administrator <input type="checkbox"/> Information/Records Manager <input type="checkbox"/> IT Manager/Specialist <input type="checkbox"/> Learning technologist <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Webmaster <input type="checkbox"/> Other – please specify
HEI name (Optional)	
<i>We will anonymise and publish the responses we receive. Please state explicitly if you want all or parts of your submission to be treated as confidential</i>	

Publication of summary of responses

An analysis of the responses, and the individual anonymised responses, will be made freely available on-line after the consultation. Northumbria University will process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 as outlined in the university's Data Protection Policy.