

Meeting Minutes

Project:	SWITCHels – Evaluation of an Open Source E-Learning Platform
Meeting:	Workshop: Learning Object Repository (LOR) – Project Results
Location:	SWITCH, Zurich
Datum:	January 12, 2007 (13:15 - 15:45)
Attendees:	see attached list “Participants.xls”
Distribution list:	All participants
Minutes:	Daniela Isch, at rete ag; daniela.isch@atrete.ch

1. Welcome / introduction	
1.1	Martin Sutter (SWITCH) welcomes the participants.
1.2	General remarks: All slides referred to in the minutes are from the PPT presentation “ProjectResults_070112_v10.ppt”. The information given in there is not duplicated here. Questions and comments from the attendees are printed in italic.
1.3	Urs Gröhbiel (SVC) presents the goals of the meeting (slide 4) and the agenda. He points out that the attendees’ feedback is important to the project management. He briefly summarizes the activities undertaken so far and gives an outlook to the next steps (testing of organizational aspects) (slides 5-8).
2. Test phase results	
2.1	Rolf Brugger (edutech) presents the results of the testing phase. The test scenario and the results can also be found at http://www.edutech.ch/lms/2006LOR . He explains the goals and key requirements of a LOR are explained (slide 11).
2.2	A LOR influences the traditional workflows. Learning objects can be transferred from the LMS to the LOR with a few mouse clicks. Goal of the testing phase was to show the feasibility of this process.
2.3	<i>Question: What is understood by “learning object”?</i> There are different types – course, module, file, quiz (see also slide 16). An LMS has usually a notion of what LOs are, e.g. chapters. These can be published by the system. It is easiest to publish the entire course; people who are only interested in parts of it can restrict the import of objects according to their needs.
2.4	As for the planned selection of a LOR, it is not possible to simply pick from something that is already available, but the solution involves some development work. Therefore, a study was carried out to prove the technical feasibility and illustrate interface and workflow.

	<p>It was <i>not</i> a goal to get a fully functional tool or to optimize design and usability.</p> <p>3 separate feasibility studies were carried out: with WebCT Vista, OLAT and Moodle, because these LMS are widely used and quite typical.</p>
2.5	<p>Integration of Moodle and Door: demonstration available at http://vmelab03.unisi.ch/moodle154/ or http://vmelab03.unisi.ch/door/</p> <p>For a list of features see slide 18.</p>
2.6	<p>Viewing web pages online is possible before downloading. Download is possible as IMS package. Exporting is very easy and can be streamlined as well. Descriptions can also be transferred.</p>
2.7	<p><i>Question: Can activities of wikis also be transferred?</i></p> <p>Exporting activities is tricky; currently it is only static content that can be transferred.</p>
2.8	<p>Versioning: By re-exporting an entire course, a new version is created.</p>
2.9	<p><i>Question: It is possible to use always the latest version in the repository without having to update it?</i></p> <p>One way could be to leave it in the LMS and simply refer to it. The problem there is that the LMS may not be open to anyone.</p>
2.10	<p><i>Question: What about notification (notify people of changes)?</i></p> <p>Good idea, will be taken up.</p>
2.11	<p><i>Question: What about rights management and legal issues of copyright? Scanned material for a closed audience is not too illegal, but there are will be problems if they are open to everyone.</i></p> <p>See 4.3.</p>
2.12	<p>RB points out that it is possible to try out the prototypes. Those who are interested can contact him and will then get the necessary information.</p>
2.13	<p>Integration of Olat and OlatLOR: demonstration available at http://switch.olat.ch/switcholat or http://switch.olat.ch/switchlor</p> <p>For a list of features see slide 20.</p>
2.14	<p>All individual components are visible after the export of one entire course. Accessibility can be modified on exporting.</p>
2.15	<p>WebCT Vista: (slide 21)</p> <p>Not much testing was possible with WebCT.</p> <p>Learning modules can only be exported manually. Automatic export of files or entire courses is possible; however, the packages are encrypted, so it is a problem to get back one's own material.</p> <p>No publish button can be added.</p>
2.16	<p>Interoperability tests: (slide 22)</p> <p>MS DotLRN is rather flexible; everything could be imported.</p> <p>The results might look disappointing, but there shouldn't be too much of a problem.</p> <p>Moodle to Moodle didn't work in the tests, but it apparently works at some organizations.</p>
2.17	<p><i>Question: When exporting interactive content, is the same activity in other LMS possible?</i></p> <p>This is only possible with SCORM packages; but, interactive contents depends on functionality offered by the LMS. Often, SCORM packages are not compatible. Sometimes, compatibility can be reached by editing the XML file or with an intelligent filter.</p> <p>It wasn't tested, and RB doesn't know many LMS that support activities.</p>

2.18	The following repository systems were evaluated: Fedora, EPrints, DSpace (slides 24-27). Fedora and EPrints can be put in a federation of repositories, which would allow every institution to have their own repository.
2.19	<i>Question: Is it possible for an organization to have several repositories?</i> Yes.
2.20	<i>Question: Comparing individual objects will lead to an enormous effort. Wouldn't a central service be better because there is less duplication?</i> This should be tested in real life situations.
2.21	<i>Question: Is there a possibility to add user comments and search by comments?</i> It is not clear how robust this would be.
3. Scenarios and benefits of a LOR	
3.1	Urs Gröbhel explains that managing a LOR isn't only about technical issues, but also about organizational and pedagogical issues. He mentions the benefits of a LOR (slide 11-12).
3.2	<i>Comment: A LOR could also be a publishing pool where people creating content can publish it and be seen.</i> Therefore, it should also be seen in search engines such as Google.
3.3	<i>Comment: Marketing aspect: communities e.g. sharing films are interested in knowing who has posted the most or whose contributions are most widely used.</i>
4. LOR selection criteria	
4.1	Rolf Brugger lists the selection criteria that the working groups have previously identified (slide 34). Additional criteria came up during the tests or were brought up by other people (slide 35-37).
4.2	Different workflows are available: publishing learning objects (i.e. LMS → LOR; slide 14) is not possible with a central LOR.
4.3	<i>Various comments:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Versioning should also be used for programmers.</i> • <i>It is necessary to have the possibility to attach different kinds of licenses. This would also require awareness training for people.</i> • <i>For reasons of efficiency, it would take a feature like work spaces where licenses can be assigned; e.g. a license could be attached to a group so that it doesn't have to be chosen each time.</i> • <i>There are different possibilities within the same LOR; every LOR that is part of the federation should be able to have all possibilities.</i> One possibility could be to have a policy that says one can only be part of the federation if certain features are supported. • <i>A small system causes problem, because everybody is waiting for content and no one publishes any. A national system would be better.</i>
4.4	There could be hundreds of additional functions, but the question is how the work space tools can work together. The system should be open enough that people can continue to use the tools they are used to.
5. SWITCH's service model	
5.1	Martin Sutter explains that the design of a service model as originally planned was too early for the working groups at that point because the content of the service was not clear.

5.2	<p>He gives an overview of existing and planned SWITCH services (slide 40). The distinctions are based on a technical point of view or evolvement rather than on a use case.</p> <p>Virtual organizations are groups of people that have something in common and collaborate in some way.</p>
5.3	<p>New Learning Technologies (slide 41):</p> <p>The SVC had various mandates; one of them was handed over to edutech, another one to SWITCH. SWITCH will continue to operate the WebCT Vista server, not free of charge, however.</p> <p>As for the open source platform / LOR, the pilot phase will start in summer 07, and the regular service will be available as of 2008.</p>
5.4	<p>Other applications could interact with a universal repository as well (streams/podcasts, VO work-spaces...). These are referred to as objects rather than merely learning objects (slide 42).</p>
5.5	<p>SWITCH does not develop content or meddle with pedagogical questions etc. The focus is clearly on technology and coordination.</p>
5.6	<p>Technical services:</p> <p>The working groups had originally requested a software development service. As this is not possible for SWITCH to provide, the project is restricted to the LMS-LOR integration</p>
5.7	<p>Running the (inter-)national LOR federation:</p> <p>The LOR federation is an interest group. SWITCH has experience with building up federations and will build it up this year.</p>
5.8	<p><i>Question: What about the integration into AAI integration?</i></p> <p>Most LMS are already integrated into AAI.</p>
5.9	<p>The AAI federation does not deal with content; only authentication and authorization data is exchanged. The LOR does the same thing, but here the main element is content.</p>
5.10	<p>Community services:</p> <p>These consist of building up an exchange platform and facilitate cooperation.</p>
5.11	<p>The issue of financing will have to be solved. The universities will have to pay for the services. Guiding principles see slide 25.</p>
5.12	<p><i>Question: Will the support for LOR integration be limited to the LMS listed?</i></p> <p>During the pilot phase, yes. If there is enough support and financing, others may also be supported later on. Development support can't be promised.</p> <p>You can apply for the participation in a pilot – maybe your project will be picked.</p>
5.13	<p><i>Question: Will the technology that is developed be open source?</i></p> <p>Yes. But if a university wants to use a commercial LOR, we can't rule it out.</p>
6. Next steps	
6.1	<p>There will be a LOR pilot, roadmap see slide 27, conditions slide 28. For this, SWITCH will start up a new project.</p> <p>As for the application procedure, SWITCH will provide an application form by end of March. Application deadline will be end of April. Kick-off is planned for mid-June.</p>
6.2	<p>The attendees are asked to disseminate the information about the LOR.</p>
6.3	<p>Project management will issue a documentation of the selected solution and ask for a last feedback from the community.</p>