SUSTAINABILITY OF OPEN SOURCE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS: MOODLE IN PARTICULAR

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In this breakout session, we will explore the issue of sustainability. Is Moodle the right choice? Can we put our faith in the Moodle community to drive the software in the direction we want it to go, at the speed with which we need it and without bugs or blips? What are our alternatives: Angel, WebCT?

Since launching Moodle in Sept 2005, the RCSI has made 17 significant customizations and countless minor "tweaks". We have moved from version 1.5 to version 1.6. We have 2 Moodle sites out of a total 20,000 Moodle sites spread across 169 countries. If everyone else has made 17 customizations, this represents 340,000 separate instances of code! Can the Moodle community manage the growing number of customizations and the changing needs of its users? Can the end-users manage their own customizations as the upgrades are released? How do we know that a new feature won't interfere with one of our customizations? What is the cost of managing and maintaining these customizations? Will Moodle continue to be as popular and effective if its already robust feature-set continues to grow to adopt these customizations? What happens if Moodle stops doing what you want it to do? How easy is it to jump ship?

On the other hand, Moodle's community is vast (130,000+ registered users on Moodle.org) and continues to grow. A thriving community means support, idea-sharing and keeps the software evolving. Open University - one of the largest and most respected practitioners of distance education - has invested significantly in the development of Moodle and plans to release it to the Moodle community.

This session will explore these issues (and more) so that we can plan for our futures and share best practices.