



Case study

Security, identity management and trust combined with personalisation of the user experience within the education sector

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Becta (British Educational Communications and Technology Association) retained us to lead a major rationalisation of their online presence including the many websites which they managed on behalf of other organisations in the education sector.

Having studied the available research into user needs in this sector, one message persisted; users were unhappy with being forced to log – in continually while they followed links between protected resources.



The need to champion emerging accessibility legislation again lead us to the conclusion that it was imperative to be able to provide users with a consistent browsing experience when moving between websites in this sector.

To do this we needed the ability to store user preferences and deliver personalisation.

The Data Protection Act provided a strong drive to ensure that the many disparate databases of users already in existence could in some way be coordinated to offer the user a single interface to his/her personal data while being able to maintain discreet relationships with the individual sites.

In addition the many webmasters were less than keen to give up management of their user databases to a central function and therefore a totally centralised solution was not possible.

It was decided at an early stage that every attempt should be made to leverage any mature open-source systems in existence in order to reduce initial capital outlay and to retain the flexibility to make changes in the future.

In the course of requirement gathering it also emerged that a major source of issue in the development of websites within the education sector was the tendency to develop on many platforms and with many scripting engines

making it especially difficult to share data between websites.

After a series of workshops and consultations we were in a position to get agreement for solution that provided central oversight of the user databases without centralising their day to day management and control and at the same time to give the user seamless access to educational content form a wide variety of producers and websites as though it were on a single website.

The solution we designed for this requirement is a wholly web-service based application which provides fully interoperable interfaces, accessible from the vast majority of programming and scripting platforms which support web services.

It provides Single Sign On via the open source CAS system, providing a central coordinating service that delivers a single of view of all registered users regardless of which site they initially registered with via a simple replication system and delivers out of the box data management interfaces.

The system employs state of the art security protocols to deliver a very robust yet flexible solution that resolves the major issues associated with developing, integrating and coordinating websites across disparate platform and

Organisations and in particular the problem of sharing personal profile information to different degrees between users and websites while keeping the user firmly in control.

The problems attached browsing the web securely are growing and from the user's viewpoint, there is a major annoyance in the need to manage personal profiles all over the internet from social networks to places where the user downloaded a few white papers.

Few people could today track down all the websites where they have recorded personal information about themselves, often for the benefit of complete strangers whose motives are unknown and unverifiable.

WSP, our web single profile tool, provides a solution to this problem within any group of co-operating websites delivering extra value to the user and at the same time guaranteeing increased traffic and return visitors for the Webmaster.