



Case study

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

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 one message continued to occur; 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 sites 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 co-ordinated to offer the user a single interface to his/her data while being able to maintain discreet relationships with the individual sites. It was decided at an early stage that every attempt should be made to leverage any mature open-source systems in existence and that the resulting application, with the exception of any custom parts, would be offered back to the open-source community

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 of any description between websites.

The solution we designed for this requirement is a wholly web-service based application which provides fully interoperable interfaces usable from the vast majority of programming and scripting platforms which support web services. It provides Single Sign On via the opensource CAS system, provides a central co-ordinating service which 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 system to resolve the major issues associated with developing, integrating and co-ordinating websites across disparate platform and

organisations. The system is currently in the process of being rolled out across the organisations websites and will be an indispensable part of the emerging web architecture.