

Meeting Report - UKeiG Intranets Forum Drop-In Session: Imperial College London Library, 25 September 2008

Today I attended a unique forum that allowed one to see different intranets and listen to the strategies behind them. The UKeiG forums have been going on for a little while, and as I have been trying to attend one for almost a year, I can attest that they are very popular. There was a range of experience (me at the lower end...) and areas (academic, research, charity, entrepreneurial) on display.

“My Imperial” is Imperial College London’s new portal for students. It is fully customisable and aims to make finding information online much more convenient. The ‘preset’ version has a TFL Service Updates widget, showing which tube lines are on time or delayed, weather information, tabs with links to the Library and to student resources, and the ability to search the College website. Students can choose which RSS feeds they subscribe to and add their favourite websites; they can also collaborate with a link to Facebook front and centre. David Ebert and his team have done an admirable and thorough job of involving the students, and intend to extend the content for staff and researchers in the next year.

Janet Corcoran showed us a nicely organised intranet for the 150 library staff at Imperial College London (scattered across 9 campuses, including some hospitals). One element of the intranet was a Confluence wiki, used by the Information Resources Development Team. Their goal was to get their documentation of procedures and other important information shareable and onto a wiki, which can be edited by all, rather than holding it in static and difficult-to-find folders (why can’t we do that?).

Cancer Research UK has 4,000 staff in various locations, 40% of whom are scientists, 50% fundraisers and 10% of whom are based in their corporate HQ. The intranet therefore needs to hold a large range of forms, policy & procedures documents, and other handy details. Because they have devolved control for uploading and editing content to 100 staff members, the intranet stays current and interesting. Previously, their single content editor proved to be a bit of a bottleneck in their system. The future will see more developments that will make this intranet even more powerful.

Finally, Jennifer Smith presented ONEIS, a very shiny and new hosted information management system. Their target audience is smaller organisations (5 to 50 employees) such as consultants or researchers. Their system looks user-friendly and flexible, allowing very finely-defined levels of access to different people. A single search brings up documents, people, images or presentations. Definitely one to watch.

Because portals are usually hidden behind a password or IP authentication, it’s a worthwhile activity to ‘air’ them once in a while (I wish mine were forum-worthy). Thank you to Janet Corcoran and Karen Blakeman for organising an interesting afternoon.

Report by Danielle Worster

UKeiG has an informal network and mailing list – the Intranets Forum which holds free informal meetings every two months. This is open to all UKeiG members.

<http://www.ukeig.org.uk>