The Solution For Universities and Higher Education

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Introduction

Universities and higher education institutes rely on their website to communicate about their presence, achievements, faculty, research, alumni. The college website should also be a single point of e-interface with the students with features like events, exam notifications, registrations for new undertaking by the college, seminars.

The college website should engage visitors, students, faculty, guardians, alumni and act as a window to all the important aspects of the University.

This paper provides the basis for using Drupal as a web-platform to resolve these issues faced by Universities.

The Problem

Many Universities are struggling to satisfy the digital needs of their faculty and students in this fast changing IT world. Universities face numerous issues like accessibility, brand consistency, editorial workflows, budget constraints, academic departments, content digitisation, faculty management, student management, research paper publishing, digital libraries, online course materials, alumni contacts. One of the important initiatives all colleges and universities need to undertake is in holding conferences and events. A well-designed website is a great enabler in achieving the above.

Universities should ideally choose a platform that provides the freedom to expand with their digital requirements, without any major complications and complex licensing commercials. Universities and higher education institutions have to publish a lot of content on their websites and requires to be updated frequently; nowadays only posting results or faculty information and research papers is just not enough in this competitive sector.

Universities require a single Platform for the entire campus that is capable of managing the needs of faculty, academic departments, students and other stakeholders. Drupal has many offerings that meet these requirements.

The Solution

The Drupal platform provides large-scale, multi-site management capabilities to Universities and Academic institutions. As the University digital presence matures, individual sites with innovative functionality will continue to grow. Drupal provides a platform for general content management and several distributions specifically targeted towards the needs of educational institutions. Ability to cater various departments of the Universities/Higher Education Institutes Drupal with its multi site feature provides the ability to faculty of different departments create their own department specific websites.

Robust Architecture

Drupal has a robust architecture with many open source distributions built on top of it. Drupal comes with a specifically crafted distribution for all the academic and education institutes called OpenScholar.

Harvard University built this platform and also maintains it .This distribution provides some important **Features:**

- Smart Publishing :The built-in WYSIWYG editor makes it simple to format text and add HTML elements. You can begin writing content from almost anywhere on your the site.
- Semantic Urls:Increase visibility and optimize the availability of the sites' pages in   search engines, such as Google and Yahoo! with semantic URLs. All pages will automatically have semantic URLs that correspond with the page's title.
- Content Aggregation:Keep the web sites fresh by pulling in content from relevant sources using RSS. OpenScholar provides built-in tools for RSS feeds making feeds easy to set up.
- Customized Content Types and Plugins: OpenScholar gives all the content-types customized for faculty research work mainly Classes, Announcements, Presentations, Publications and Calendar. There are several other content plugins which can be enabled and configured by the end-user.
- Sleek Themes, Elegant Look and Feel:Browse and choose from a variety of responsive and elegant themes with the Theme Picker tool. Each theme includes the flexibility to use distinct color schemes to match a site's desired look and feel.
- The Interactive Layout Tool:Design page layouts using a visual "drop-and-drop" blueprint of the site. The interactive Layout Tool provides an exciting way to arrange the content presentation on any site. Each site owner can design site-wide layouts or unique layouts for different pages of their site.
- Social Collaboration:Maintain social networking on each scholar site, and/or on the entire installation. Site owners can create user accounts for colleagues and other stakeholders and invite them to be members of their site. There they can collaborate on projects or exchange thoughts and ideas. Site owners have full control of your site members' status and access to your site.
- Analytics:OpenScholar is preconfigured to work with Google Analytics to capture reports of all site activity. Just provide your Google Analytics ID and data from your OpenScholar site will be sent to your Google analytics account automatically.

- Faculty Virtual Site:OpenScholar provides the faculty members with the feature to create Virtual Site Environments. Each faculty member can create Pages, Publish Publications,Post Blogs,Presentations,Research Papers etc. OpenScholar comes with preconfigured widgets and applications which includes Calendar,Social Links,Faculty Cv etc.
- Events,Seminars and Project/Initiative Sites: Every University has to conduct Events,Conferences and seminars. Openscholar comes with various preconfigured widgets and apps like Events Sign Up,Import Events which makes organising events super easy for the Universities.OpenScholar also provides with an option to create project and groups specific sites where user can create Activities, news, manage people, resources and many more.

MultiLingual Support

Universities generally have the students and faculties from different demographic regions and there could be possibly be language barriers. There could be different languages taught in the Institute as well. Drupal comes with multilingual support which means All the Data on the website can be provided to the users in their native language. Further to this country specific language pages can also be provided to the end visitors

Interoperability

Drupal comes with incredible interoperability which means Drupal can fit anywhere. Drupal can communicate with other technologies far much easily as compared to others. An University already using a technology can integrate with Drupal so that the systems seamless inter-operate. Drupal can easily integrate with other web applications through open standards. Web services like XML, REST and JSON can be easily configured with Drupal. Drupal can also integrate with open source learning platforms like MOODLE to provide learner-centric tools and collaborative learning environments that empower both teaching and learning.

Workflow and Access Control

workflow and access control are the core features that an education institute requires. Drupal can allow hundreds of users to access and manage their sections of the site. Permissions, Roles and user tagging allows optimized access control. Each department has its own unique tag that match with user profiles. These tags allow one to control not only who is allowed to create certain content, but also where it belongs on the website. Drupal can also provide a highly configurable hierarchy of users.

Library Management

Drupal is a very powerful Content management System (CMS), most suited to meet the requirements of a Librarian in any university or Institute without much technicality and comparative ease. Drupal has very rich module with library technical aspects like MARC module, Bibliography module ,SOPAC,EZProxy,LDAP, etc. Drupal is being accepted by some of the big names like American library Association, Cornell University etc.

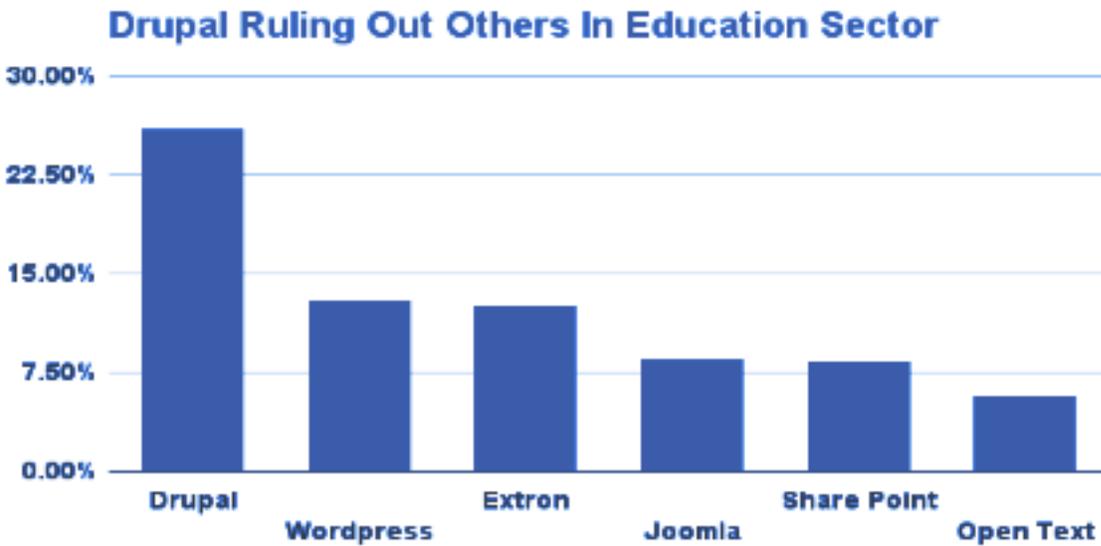## e-Learning and Student Management

Effective eLearning and knowledge management solutions are an essential element of success for The Students and Education Institutions.Drupal caters to many of the needs of an e-learning platform.

- Recreate the Classroom: Drupal comes with Organic Groups module to create distinct cohorts of users. Other contributed modules such as Context and core modules such as Taxonomy can be used to build out entire structures in your website that recreate and improve on the traditional classroom model.Drupal comes with various modules to support different kinds of presentations.
- Surveys and Assessments: The preferred tool in Drupal 7 for surveys is the Webform module. Webform can be custom configured and extended as an outstanding tool for delivering lessons and measuring attainment. Many additional contributed modules extend the Webform module, and it can easily be customized to achieve the exact functionality needed
- The Challenge of Authentication: A key challenge in e Learning is authentication, the question of who is actually spending time on the class site and taking the assessments. Several different methods attempt to gauge attendance and engagement, but most can be tricked by a student leaving a page open in the browser. Sophisticated systems employ various types of digital signatures that identify patterns of usage so that it becomes apparent when someone else logs into a system on behalf of the original user.
- Mobile Devices: Responsive themes in Drupal eliminate the need to have separate implementation for mobile devices.

Standards Compliance

Drupal respects standards compliance and can be configured to use eLearning standards such as SCORM and the Tin Can API. Compliant solutions can be built through customizing Drupal or through integration with third-party services. When dealing with any set of standards, such as medical privacy standards, any compliant third-party technology with an open API can be integrated with Drupal.
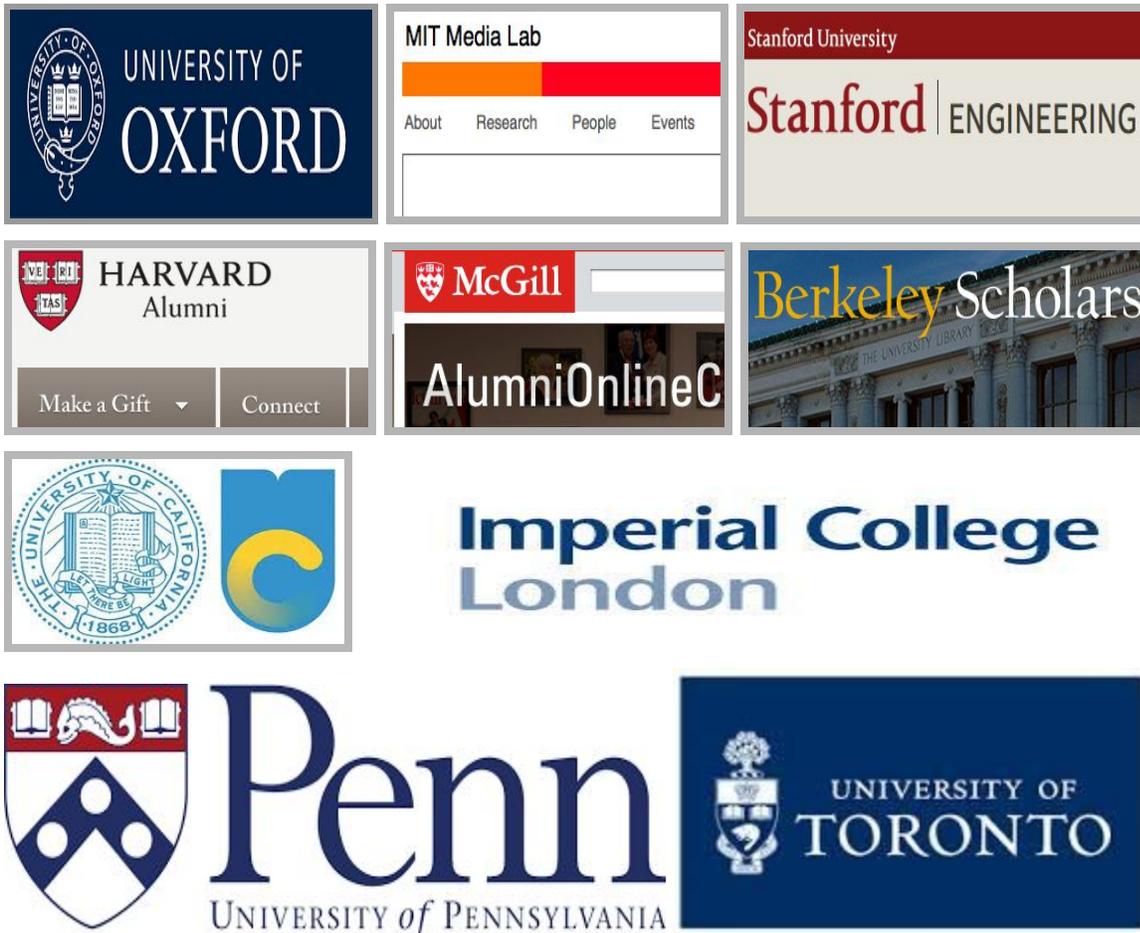
Why Choose Drupal If You Are In Education

- **26% of all edu sites are in Drupal**
- **71 out of World's top 100 Universities use Drupal**
- **State of the art Distributions like Openscholar are available for free**
- **Drupal sites are in many languages,including...English French Spanish Arabic and many more**
- **Lower costs,support for integration with campus authentication and authorization systems,and strong content relation capabilities - particularly taxonomy support for libraries**

Who Uses Drupal

Few of the World's top institutions using Drupal

About gai

gai Technologies, a Web Development company with Technology Centers based in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, India. We are currently *ranked Number 1 in India and Top 15 globally on drupal.org (Sep 2018)*, based on our contributions from templates to projects. We are one of the *first companies globally to go live on Drupal 8*, even when it was an Alpha release.

We focus on delivering projects using Drupal, *working with both End-Customers and other Developmental Partners globally* to deliver turnkey projects. We have recently ventured into Hybrid Mobile apps using Cordova/Phonegap and React-Native.

We have grown organically to a *40+ personnel multi-talented team, clocking over 20,000 hours of combined Drupal Agile expertise* across multiple domains. We support customers across websites, *Mobile Apps* SDLC, from Planning & Conceptualization to Development, Support and Maintenance to Migration and Sunset.

Where we could pitch in to support your Digital Initiatives

Strategy & Consulting	Website Design	CMS and Custom Web solutions	Mobile Application Development	Website Maintenance & Web Hosting Services	Digital Marketing
• Business Analysis & Consulting • Information Architecture & User Experience • Content Copywriting • Migration to Drupal and Wordpress	• Portal & Website Design (B2B, B2C) • App Design • Website Redesign • Responsive/Mobile friendly Website Design and Development	• Enterprise Web Portal Development • Enterprise level world class Drupal Solutions • Wordpress Solutions • Custom PHP Application solutions • Ecommerce solutions • Intranet Portals	• Mobile Application (Android/IOS/Windows) Development with *PHONE GAP* • Hybrid Mobile Apps • Mobile Apps with Content Management System Backend configurations • Drupal Gap Applications	• Website Support • Technology Upgrades • Content Updates • Security Testing • Tools Integration Server Selection & Set Up • Web Hosting and Domain services • Server and Performance optimization	• Analytics • Keyword Analysis • On page and Off page optimization • Link Building Commencement • Outreach Process and Email Marketing

Regarding our credentials, we have delivered to over *50+ Global Customers* including marquee customers like **AlFaisal University,Excelonz online learning platform,** NIIT University, IDG India,British Council,CARE, FEI & EIFL. We have proven experience & expertise in delivering High-Value Projects to customers across the globe.

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Nitish is an Drupal Enthusiast and has assisted various global brands in transforming their digital experience.

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