

## Portal 2008: measurement and assessment - Third Times A Charm

Chief Information Officers and other Information Technology professionals met during a three day conference, Portal 2008, at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to discuss "Measurement and Assessment of Your Portal." The conference was attended by 165 individuals from 80 academic institutions from the United States, Europe and Australia.

The conference featured two outstanding keynote addresses. The first was given by Jim Farmer, Director of Georgetown University's Interoperability Center and a consultant to the US Department of Education. The second keynote was given by Ray Henderson, Chief Products Officer at ANGEL Learning.

Farmer noted that effective assessment for learning and growth involves using assessment as a tool for constant, incremental, and sustained improvement. He cited the need for such assessment in the careers of many students in the American Higher Education System. Citing evidence from 12 colleges and university studies that measured student success, Farmer presented data showing that the use of technology in education, though expensive, increased pass rates, graduation rates, course grades, and overall satisfaction with the college experience among students as opposed to a feeling of frustration and a sense of failure.

The title of Henderson's address was "Academic Portals and Learning Management Systems, Friends? Foes? Or Fads?" His presentation dealt with the question: "Will the two primary technology resources of academic institutions continue their parallel, but separate development paths, or does it make sense to combine their efforts and develop new forms of relationships between them?" He made the case, that the time may be ripe for pursuing the latter alternative.

The conference also included 26 sessions given by attendees reporting on aspects of portal development, maintenance, and assessment as well as showcasing developments. In addition, several opportunities to meet formally and informally with representatives of the eleven corporate sponsors of the conference were provided to conference attendees.

Portal 2008 was the third annual portal conference hosted by the Information Technology Division of Gettysburg College and is recognized as a premiere opportunity for the exchange of current information on academic portals and social networking throughout the academic portal community.

For more information on the conference and links to the presentations go to <http://www.gettysburg.edu/portal>

### Portal 2009: users, uses, usability

The fourth installment of the Portal Conference at Gettysburg College will be held June 2-5, 2009 in Gettysburg Pennsylvania. The theme for 2009 is *users, uses, usability* to focus the attention of the conference on portals and the customer.

Once again, we are hoping to keep the conference registration fee low by partnering with vendors to help offset the costs of putting on the conference. If you are interested in the conference, go to <http://www.gettysburg.edu/portal> and click on the registration link to request a reminder email for the 2009 conference. If you are interested in sponsorship opportunities, send an email to [portal@gettysburg.edu](mailto:portal@gettysburg.edu)

### Portal Directory: A Resource

A new, searchable Portal Directory has recently been launched as a resource for members of the higher education community. The Portal Conference focuses on networking and developing collegial contacts with fellow higher education members with an interest in portals. This directory can help match people willing to provide insight, information and opinions on portals with those looking for advice and information.

The current build of the directory is very basic as we measure the useage and effectiveness of this tool. Should the tool prove to be wanted and useful, then enhancements will be made, such as a browse function.

To check out the directory, go to <http://www.gettysburg.edu/portal> and click on the directory link to the left. You can search the entries or add your institution to the database.

portal 2009  
users uses usability

june 2-5, 2009  
[www.gettysburg.edu/portal](http://www.gettysburg.edu/portal)

the portal newsletter

## Using SharePoint 2007 in Higher Education: What Will Happen in Your Project?

By Janus Boye & Dorthe R. Jespersen, authors of the recently published *Best Practices for Using SharePoint for Public Websites – A Business Person's Guide*

Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007 has been tremendously successful for collaboration and intranets, and its dominant position means that the product has now emerged as an obvious; some would say almost unavoidable choice as the next generation portal. While there are good reasons for the popularity of SharePoint, it is certainly not as safe and risk-free as many like to think.

### What Happens in a Typical SharePoint Project?

As SharePoint 2007 is still quite new (released Oct 06), many are still gathering experience. A serious lack of product understanding among buyers and integrators alike is leading to complications in many SharePoint projects. Both parties have tended to underestimate the complexity of the platform and very few have delivered on time and on budget. Migration from SPS 2003 is one task that has proven especially difficult.

SharePoint projects are often initiated by IT departments, as they have a better understanding of the technology. As the initial driver, IT has a significant impact on the scope of the projects. However, remember that without a business-level understanding of the product, you will have difficulties making the best usage of SharePoint's strengths. In particular,

you will face challenges in areas such as microsities, user rights, and templates, as the tool offers tremendous freedom for users – potentially more than you would like to offer.

As there are no established best practices for how to make best use of SharePoint, you easily end up with a system integrator who has not implemented most of your requirements. Consequently, without a business-level vision for SharePoint you are very much at the mercy of what your partner decides to do. Moreover, even the largest institutions will have trouble getting direct support from Microsoft. As the prices to the higher education sector are usually highly discounted, there is no room for Microsoft to provide support activities, including information on the product roadmap. Without this information you may end up spending resources on developing functionality, which may be introduced in the next upgrade.

### Keeping Your Project on Track: Develop Your Own Skills and Learn from Others

Building your own skills will enable you to make better use of the product and ensure the quality of the implementation. We recommend setting up a strong and experienced project team from the beginning. SharePoint calls for governance, a challenge in the distributed

editor and/or IT organisation common in higher education institutions. Be aware that Microsoft partners so far have very little experience with SharePoint in higher education institutions. Getting the right help can prove difficult when partners have a waiting list of corporate clients, who are not under the same economic and administrative constraints as universities. Factor into the project that the unique requirements of higher education institutions such as integration with third-party services like e-learning or user administration and the ability to tailor the user interface to different user audiences do not come out-of-the-box with SharePoint.

Even if involving Microsoft directly proves impossible, we recommend that you insistently request roadmap information from Microsoft, so that you can build it into your project planning. We also highly recommend that you actively encourage practitioners at all levels in the organisation to stay in touch with the community, and learn from the experiences of other organisations implementing SharePoint. If you really want to benefit from this communication, you need to be open and willing to share own mistakes and lessons learned.

---

#### Gettysburg College

Janet Morgan Riggs - President  
Rodney Tosten - Vice President Information Technology

#### Portal Newsletter

##### Contributors

Susan Evans - *College of William & Mary*  
Cindy Hudson - *Randolph College*  
Michelle Tarby - *LeMoyne College*  
Dennis Trinkle - *IHETS*

#### Portal Conference Director

Stephan C. Lewis - *Gettysburg College*

#### Conference Coordinator/Editor

Mark R. Albert - *Gettysburg College*

#### Program Committee

Scott Hayes - *College of William & Mary*  
Sonya Hughes - *The Catholic University of America*  
Michelle Tarby - *LeMoyne College*  
William Wilson - *Colby College*

### Vendors

A special thanks to the vendors that help make the Portal Conference an affordable reality. Without their help, the cost for putting on the conference would have to be passed to the participants

