Hi Jim, good to hear from you!

Moodle is well set up to support IMS CC as it already contains the
key components:

Import/Export functions
- All content is exportable as an XML file + named file directories.
- Content can be imported from an XML file created by the above system.
- Import and Export of course content can be done by an instructor.
- The instructor can determine which course activities the import and/
or export

The interface could always be easier (it prints out a great deal of
information about the process that faculty sometimes find is more
than they want to know), however the current interface is currently
used widely by teachers, faculty, and non-technical users to move
content from one Moodle server to another, or, more commonly, to make
a new copy of a course from an archive or template.

Since we are already exporting all actiities and content to XML and
file names that match the folders created and files created in the
course*, going from moodle.xml to IMS CC should mainly be a matter of
an XSL transformation (from one XML format to another).

One of the key points I think is that the LMS creating the course
cartridge needs to work on the concept of a course--in both
Blackboard and Moodle the 'course' is a fundamental part of the LMS
architecture. When an archive is created, modules in Moodle call a
common API to generate the xml and file structure for the archive--
since the course is a fundamental unit, all modules register
instances of themselves as belonging to a particular course, which
facilitates building an archive/copy of that course. I assume that
Blackboard functions similarly, though of course I have not looked at
it's code. One of the key concerns I mentioned previously to Jim of
making IMS CC work with Sakai is that Sakai's architecture is
different, and it is not based on a fundamental course unit.

I think this means that the tool to create a cartridge in Sakai must
itself be a unique application--one that understands how the various
applications in a Sakai installation show up to students in a
particular 'course' and/or provides an interface for an instructor to
collect activities into a 'course' for archiving, and then makes an
archive of this 'course' to build the cartridge from. In contrast
with Moodle and (I assume) with Blackboard (with caveat below), the
API is already there it just needs to be set up to translate it's
output to IMS CC.

I would be very interested in discussing this with the group further or being corrected on any of my perceptions.

Best
Michael

* Blackboard creates a virtual file system rather than using the server's filesystem, so in the archive file the folders are named sequentially, and don't correspond directly to names used in the course. This means that the archive locates binary files (pdf, doc, etc.) in folders with names like #10001, #10002, etc. and a archive folder may contain files that are located in various different 'folders' in a given course.

On Aug 10, 2007, at 8:01 AM, Jim Farmer wrote:

> On the 26th of June you asked about the available and "testing" of
> IMS Common Cartridge. Let me answer from several different
> perspectives.
>
> As a long time and widely used Blackboard site Georgetown
> University is interested in using publisher-developed Common
> Cartridges in Blackboard. Georgetown University has been discussing
> "testing" Common Cartridges with several publishers, IMS, and
> Blackboard, and potential funding agencies The discussions of a
> "Conformance Test Set" suggests one level of testing, but I have
> suggested the key question is whether the process is simple enough
> that faculty will install a publisher's Common Cartridge rather
> than ask students to use the publisher's online services. The data
> suggests that by a 10 to 1 margin, faculty recommend the use of the
> publishers' online site rather than implement a cartridge.
> (Remember Blackboard cartridges are available for many publications
> and courses and Blackboard is available to most faculty). My
> colleague Mike Neuman and I have been suggesting we document
> faculty effort in using a Common Cartridge and whether (and how
> much) technical support they require from either the publishers or
> the university information technology staff. That is, real world
> testing with feedback on the process and, by implication, design.
> Our objective is routine and broad implementation of publishers
> materials when a faculty member elects to use those materials. Mike
> and I are more interested in the "early majority" than the "early
> adopters" because that is where the benefits are for students,
> faculty, and publishers. (The early adopters are those that will
> overcome any technical barrier and generally have the knowledge,
> skill, and motivation to do so--as least to do so after they--like
> Jon--have demonstrated their iPhone to everyone around).
>
> Charlie Leonhardt suggested that Georgetown may also be a location
> to test Common Cartridges with Sakai--Georgetown University is a
> Sakai Partner. Again "test" meaning the broader tests that Mike and
> I have suggested. I believe Charlie will be discussing this with
> the new Sakai Executive Director Michael Korcuska. I am not sure
> that others in Sakai are interested in the level of coordination it
> requires with faculty and IT staff to obtain data about the
> implementation process and faculty decision-making.
>
> At the meeting of publishers with the Sakai Project several years

> ago, the publishers list of priorities were Blackboard, Moodle, and
> then likely Desire2Learning. This reflects the number of students
> that could be using their supplementary materials (more available
> for undergraduate than graduate courses based on course--not class--
> enrollments). At a meeting last week, Charlie suggested expanding
> the testing to include Moodle. Mike and I are hesitant because of
> the resource requirements/funding issues.
>
> I believe you have broader issues about exchange of content between
> learning systems. At this point we have not discussed this use of
> Common Cartridge though I can understand your perspective. We know
> the Open University Open Access materials--incredibly rich, well
> tested, and effective course materials--will be Common Cartridges
> and likely to be developed on Moodle and then exported as Common
> Cartridges. While Mike and I have been focused on Common Cartridge
> import, as you pointed out, use of content authored on another
> system requires an export capability.
>
> Let me discuss this further with Charlie and Mike. Likely we have
> gone beyond "technical interoperability" to test the point where
> use of Common Cartridge changes faculty decisions whether to use
> these materials and, if so, from where. (For purposes of monitoring
> student performance, I strongly prefer installation on the local
> course management systems).
>
> I have found few who are aware of the extensive use of publisher
> materials that both the surveys reveal and collateral data
> supports. But if we focus on faculty choices--made all the more
> difficult for courses taught by adjunct faculty without time for
> extensively identifying, selecting and modifying content, we have
> different criteria for "good enough" Common Cartridge.
>
> We are hoping to explore these issues further at the early
> September IMS Meeting at the University of Maryland.
>
> Comments and suggestions appreciated. Thanks for the communication--
> and patience. Best wishes at MoodleRooms.
>
> jim
>
> --
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>

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