

Open Source Courseware for Learning and Collaboration (May 06)

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A growing number of organizations are turning to free, open-source software for everything from computer networks to Web browsers to office-productivity tools. The benefits of open-source software include cost effectiveness, security, flexibility and adaptability as well as ongoing support and development. Learning organizations worldwide also are implementing open-source courseware to manage learning and collaboration activities. Let's look at some of the top providers of open-source courseware.

Alkacon Software GmbH provides support, training and consulting services for OpenCms. It also is dedicated to developing products and solutions for OpenCms installations. OpenCms is a complete and powerful open-source Web-content-management system. Alkacon Software GmbH is the official maintainer and major contributor to the OpenCms project. OpenCms provides features suited for medium and large enterprise Internet or intranet applications. It is a Java- and XML-based system, completely built from open-source components—meaning OpenCms can be deployed on almost any existing IT infrastructure without licensing costs. Some of the major features of OpenCms include an easy installation process, a direct-edit feature that allows users to open the editor directly to modify the content, an integrated user-management and permission system, multi-language support and an online-help system. Its work environment is completely browser-based. For more information on OpenCms, visit www.opencms.org.

Dokeos is an open-source e-learning and course-management Web application to manage learning and collaboration activities, and launch and develop blended learning programs. Equipped with language translation tools, users can translate content for 34 different languages. In addition, Dokeos offers many downloadable extensions that users can integrate into their existing Dokeos installation. These extensions include plug-ins such as: a RSS-reader, RSS-creator and CoolSearch; tools such as a small-performance indicator, wiki and virus scanner; style sheets; and icon packs. Dokeos also offers training for e-learning content authoring, getting started with Dokeos, securing and configuring Dokeos, and developing Dokeos extensions—either at the Dokeos training center in Brussels, Belgium, at the client's location or online. Dokeos onsite training lasts for two days. Online training includes three hours of live conferencing, two weeks of remote coaching and three hours of live conferencing. All their seminars are available in Dutch, English, French and Spanish. For more information, see www.dokeos.com.

iWare WorkSpace is a versatile open-source Web-based PHP- and MySQL-powered content-management system designed to create professional Web pages and sites easily. This content management system installs quickly on an organization's Windows- or UNIX/Linux-based Web server through its intuitive installation script and installation guide. This system allows users to author content quickly and update Web site content in real time. With iWare, users can deploy multiple Web applications into content by selecting from pre-installed modules including add-ins such as a guest book, Web to e-mail form processing, event calendar, links portal, news and subscriber database, and more. The system also supports 19 different languages. To learn more about iWare, see www.dsiware.com.

Joomla! is a production of Open Source Matters, the same team that developed the Mambo Content Management System. Open Source Matters has taken its final, stable version of Mambo, cleaned it up and renamed it. Joomla! is an open-source content-management system for simple Web sites to complex corporate applications. Joomla! is easy to install, simple to manage and reliable. This system allows administrators—even when the site is offline—to view the site and front-end users to select the WYSIWYG editor they want to use rather than having to use the default. Several crucial fixes have been applied to Joomla! and numerous vulnerabilities have been

patched. In addition, many extensions are available to download including: JoomlaXplorer, which is a file-management script; community builder, a workflow management tool; Gallery2Bridge that allows Gallery2 to be imbedded into Joomla!; ExtCalendar Events for managing schedules and events; and Joom!Fish, the official add-on for managing multilingual content. For more information, see www.joomla.org.

Miro Software Solutions is a developer of integrated software solutions tailored to organizations' needs. Miro founded the Mambo Foundation and transferred the ownership of the Mambo code and trademarks to the foundation. Mambo is an open-source Web-content-management system and is capable of building sites from several pages to several thousand pages. It can be hosted on any server that runs PHP and MySQL. Mambo is a solution for developers and beginning users because it has an easy-to-use administrator interface, WYSIWYG editing facilities and much more. This open-source CMS uses English as its natural language as well as JavaScript and PHP programming languages. The latest version of Mambo, Version 4.6 RCI, has leaner, cleaner code, improved SEO with handling of 404 errors, improved site search performance and better security. In addition, it has a universal installer: one installer handles installation of all extensions; a get text tool eases translation and management of language packs; and there are two new classes: mosDirectory and mosFileManager. Mambo's Web site also includes resources to track bugs, patches, feature requests and known issues. To learn more about Mambo, see www.mamboserver.com.

Moodle is an open-source course-management system designed to help educators create quality online courses, Web sites and learning communities based on pedagogy principles. Moodle can scale from a single instructor-led site to a 50,000-learner corporate university. Moodle has a large, diverse user community with more than 100,000 registered users who speak over 70 languages in 150-plus countries. It also offers users easy access to course content and online resources such as library, digital reading rooms and forums for online discussions between instructors and learners. The Moodle Web site offers many resources as well, including developer information, coding guide, CVS guide to access Moodle source code, bug tracker to report general bugs and fixes, and a security site to report security problems. A number of additional modules and add-ons such as a detailed quiz-response table, DFwiki, language packs and an internal mail system are available. To learn more about Moodle, visit <http://moodle.org>.

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