

Liferay vs. current EGI back office

The current EGI back office selects the best-of-breed implementation for each service (MediaWiki for wiki, phpBB for discussion forum, etc.), then loosely integrates them using a common directory holding users and user groups. The Liferay portal has portlets for most of the same tasks, each feature-wise inferior to the best-of-breed implementation, but integrates them together more tightly, allows for rapid sites development and expands on social features like content ratings and user comments.

EGI Back Office Services

- public web sites with structured web content (OpenCMS)
- blogs (Pebble)
- wiki (MediaWiki)
- mailing lists (Mailman)
- meeting and conference planner (Indico)
- request tracking with custom workflows (RT)
- document server (DocDB)
- discussion forum with polls (phpBB)
- instant messaging (Jabber)

Detailed Comparison

Public web sites

Both OpenCMS and Liferay support easy creation of multiple web sites. OpenCMS is more flexible in web design, it can use any web design. Liferay needs a web design created specifically for Liferay. On the other hand, Liferay offers more system way of integration of web applications using portlets. Liferay offers optional user rating and comments on web pages.

Both OpenCMS and Liferay offer structured web content with specialized input forms, used e.g., for news, events, case studies, slide shows etc.

Blog

The Pebble blog is a standalone blog, optionally extensible with custom plugins written in Java, used e.g., for spam checking using the Akismet service. The Liferay blog portlet is better integrated with the web site. It can be extended using so called hooks, but this option was not yet investigated.

Wiki

The MediaWiki is the wiki implementation used on Wikipedia. It is full of features and has many installable extensions. Using namespaces, editing of pages can be restricted, while retaining search capability over all content.

Liferay offers wiki portlet. The wiki expresivity is somewhat limited compared to MediaWiki. Each site can have its separate wiki, or even more than one wiki. The Liferay way is better for private content, but worse for public content with restricted editing rights. Liferay offers optional user rating and comments on wiki pages.

Mailing lists

Liferay offers no support for mailing lists. It does offer "Message boards", which are more similar to discussion forum though.

Where Liferay may have advantages

- rapid site development
- system way of integrating web applications
- easy creation of personal or private web pages, wikis and whole sites for groups
- more social and better integrated blog
- documents and media can be easily integrated into other content (web pages, wikis, blogs)
- social features of Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter
- cloud storage file sharing service

Meeting planner

Liferay offers only very limited functionality through the Meetups porlet of the Social Networking extension in comparison to Indico which can be also used as a conference organizing tool.

Document server

The DocDB system stores files on filesystem. Liferay stores files in database. In both systems, access permissions cannot be granted to individual users, only to groups in DocDB, or to roles in Liferay. Liferay offers the Liferay Sync client for Android, iOS, Linux, MacOS X and Windows and can be used as a basic cloud storage file sharing service like Dropbox or Google Drive.

Request Tracking

Liferay offers no functionality comparable to RT for tracking user requests.

The RT system can be customised by modifying its Perl scripts, which can be used for implementing workflows, e.g., SA2 software releases. Liferay offers basic workflows typically on approving web content and documents.

Discussion forum

The phpBB forum is the most widely used implementation of discussion forum on the Internet. It has many community created extensions ("mods") available. Liferay's "Message boards" have more or less comparable functionality. But it has no community creating mods. Both phpBB and the Liferay portal allow for creating polls.

Instant messaging

The EGI back office uses Jabber server for instant messaging. Users can use any standard Jabber client. Liferay's extension Social Office enables web based chat for logged in users. Liferay does not provide multi user chat rooms though.

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