Website Work Group

Summary Report
November 2012

This report is a brief abstract summarizing the development of the discussions and the progress made thus far by the members of the Website Work Group. The group is made of five primary members: Evan Bend, Gus Falkenberg, Joshua Klingbeil, Rose Ziech, and Steven Fischer. They respectively represent: OWLS, IFLS, WVLS, and SCLS Library Systems and the Dept. of Public Instruction. WiscNet staffers have expressed an interest in this group as well but have not yet been "officially" part of the discussion or invited as work group members.

- Wisconsin Public Library Consortium (WPLC - http://www.wplc.info) held a "Low Hanging Fruit" session a while back, at which 5 broad areas of potential collaboration between library systems were identified.

- WiLS took these categories and worked to form a work group for each. My director volunteered me to chair the Website Work Group.

- I was aware, from previous conversations with Kurt Kiefer, that the Department of Public Instruction (DPI - http://dpi.state.wi.us/) was undergoing an internal project to switch to the Drupal platform, and was investing in development expertise as well as a stable infrastructure host for their servers' platform. The DPI servers will reside in facilities hosted by the DoA's Division of Enterprise Technology (DET - http://www.doa.state.wi.us/index.asp?locid=155).

- Kurt had stated that he wanted to create a shared resource collaboration opportunity for schools and libraries out of this, so when the work group was formed, we invited DPI to be a part of it.

- The work group includes technology experts from four library systems, and Steven Fischer of DPI who is a key player in their Drupal migration\deployment project. There are some interested observers from DPI's Division for Libraries and Technology (DLT) who've participated in one or two of our conference calls.

- The work group has identified the basic needs which must be met in order for migrations from existing website platforms to make sense. These are:

  o Drupal 6, 7, and eventually 8 platform support.

  o Managed and unmanaged Drupal environments

    ▪ Managed for those who just want a stable instance with a common set of plugins and features in which they can drop in content, ala Drupal Gardens

    ▪ Unmanaged for those who wish to self-manage their Drupal environments

  o QoS (infrastructure support, up-time, server and bandwidth capacity, backups, etc.)

    We have also expressed web development and design expertise needs.

- WiLS is undergoing a restructuring and reassessing their services. Toward this endeavor, they've hosted focus groups to help identify potential services and one of the services which received a strong indication of high priority was website development.

- WiscNet is/has? also reworking/reworked? their website and is utilizing the Drupal platform. From an admittedly brief conversation with Craig Stephenson and Maddy Covelli, combined with a general knowledge of WiscNet's resources I derived that WiscNet has the infrastructure and expertise to host platforms. On top of that, Craig mentioned that they were considering offering development services as well.

- WiscNet was invited to the 10/16/2012 discussion but was unable to attend due to a conflict in scheduling. They will be invited to the November discussion and will be a part of the scheduling poll, to ensure we are able to include them.

- Various members have expressed strong interest in a WiscNet partnership.

- At the October discussion, DPI indicated that it was nearing completion of its own new Drupal website launch. The servers DPI is using will likely not be accessible for libraries and schools to host sites, but Steven asserted that DPI was interested in facilitating a hosting platform, probably by funding/acquiring the server(s) which would be located at a facility such as the Dept. of Enterprise Technology (DET) but that those servers could also live at a WiscNet facility. It was estimated that servers could be acquired for this purpose by mid-2013.

- The members which have in-house Drupal development expertise mentioned that work on their own libraries would consume much or all of that expertise, likely through 2013. It was unclear when their expertise might be readily available for consumption by other systems or libraries. An investigation into a WiLS facilitated/managed Web Development clearing-house might discover additional resources with more availability, possibly in the k12 or academic sectors.

- WiLS and/or WiscNet may also be able to provide a significant supplement to website development as direct services.

- An issue that hasn't been discussed is the inclusion of Internet presence/website/Social Media development and management plans as a higher level service category than just website development. That discussion seems to be getting too far from this group's original purpose, and may need to be addressed as a "Phase 2" or by another group altogether. I mention it because it is on our own agenda here at WVLS.
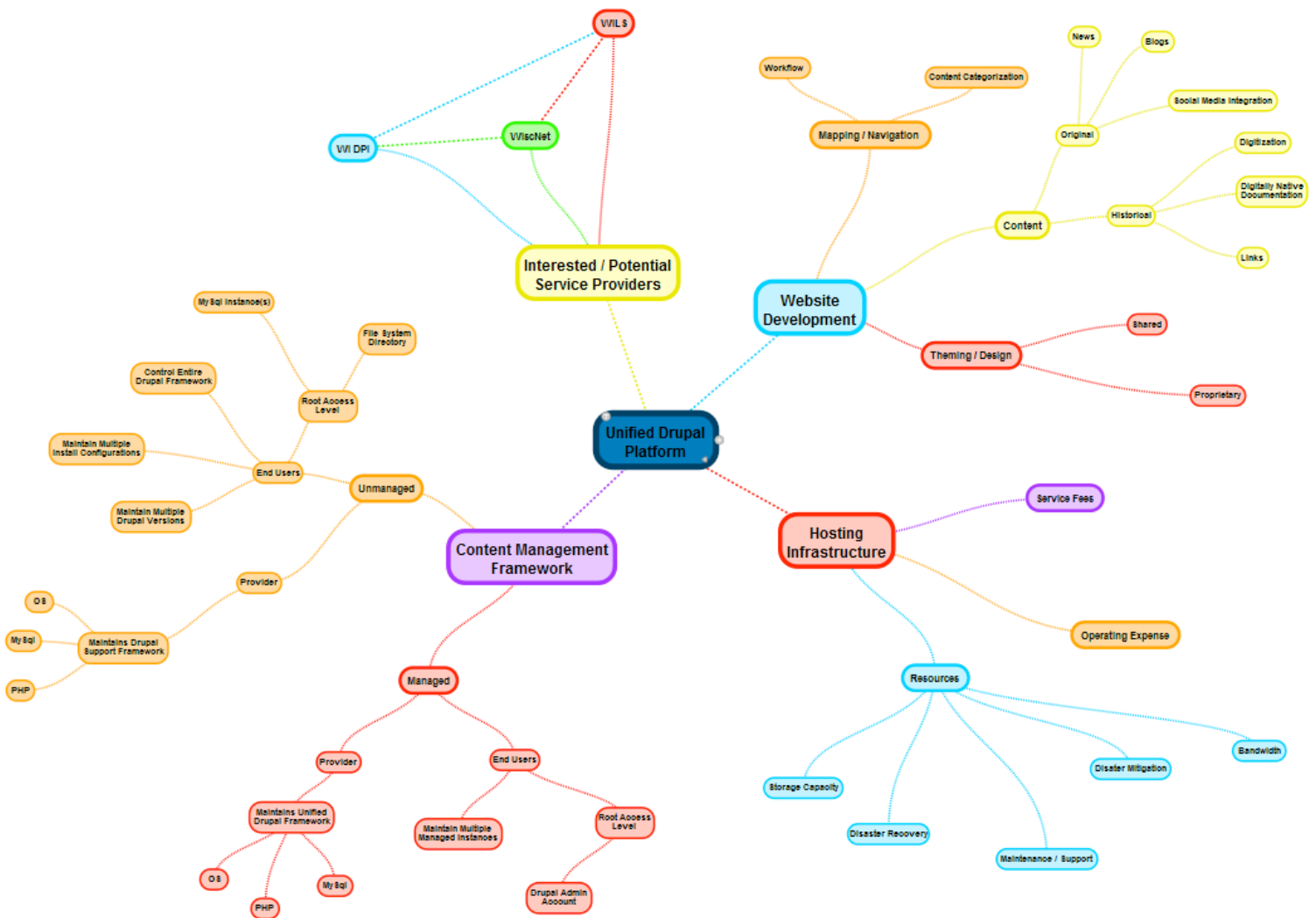
So What's Next?

- We will work with WiscNet and WiLS to clarify their positions and intents in this concept.

- We will follow up with DPI to begin the planning process for server acquisition and ensure there is a plan in place for staging and implementing the servers.

- Pending progress of those first two items we will work with the appropriate partners to ensure there is a plan for initial deployment of services, and availability of services appropriate for initial consumers.

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Overall this work group is moving the website collaboration effort forward. Much of the work has been in identifying fundamental needs and articulating them in ways that translate into potential services. I've drafted a map that represents much (if not all) of the big picture that has developed as our discussions have progressed. The "Unified Drupal Platform" central concept is not an official title, but just a term that helps me understand the scope and context of this effort. This group's initial and primary focus is on Hosting and Framework, but a collaborative website development option must eventually be considered as a primary need too.

Respectfully submitted by Joshua Klingbeil – November 8th, 2012.