

HarvestRoad Hive facilitates the ‘buzz’ of learning at Staffordshire University

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Agency: **Bob Little Press & PR**

Remaining at the leading edge of learning technology, Staffordshire University - one of the first users of virtual learning environments (VLEs), known in the corporate world as learning management systems (LMSs) – is now discovering the benefits of using a Federated Digital Repository System (FDRS).

The system – HarvestRoad Hive, from Giunti Labs - manages any form of content used in online learning, corporate training and knowledge management initiatives.

Angus Turpin, managing director of Giunti Labs UK Ltd, explained: “HarvestRoad Hive establishes a bridge between islands of content within and across multiple institutions or organisations, regardless of the type of content or purpose for its existence. It is used to store and manage ‘learning’ or ‘knowledge objects’ and their metadata, assembles these into standards-compliant packages, and delivers that content on demand to learning and course management systems, corporate training systems or web portals.

“HarvestRoad Hive can interface with almost any ERP, learning or course management system and is already integrated with several commonly used course management systems, authoring and content assembly tools.”

Professor Mark Stiles, Staffordshire University’s head of Learning Development and Innovation, commented: “Initially, we developed a VLE for ourselves and also bought Lotus Learning Space about 1997/98. However, we settled on the Blackboard VLE and began to migrate the content of hundreds of modules from our existing VLE to Blackboard.

“In doing so, we learnt the hard way about the challenges of this process – and we vowed never to be put in that position again! Now we’re diversifying how we deliver e-learning materials and looking at different systems for doing this – not just VLEs – we were led to consider learning repositories.”

As someone long involved with standards work and now a member of the board of directors of the IMS Global Learning Consortium - a global, non-profit, member association that provides leadership in shaping and growing the learning and educational technology industries through collaborative support of standards, innovation, best practice and recognition of superior learning impact – Mark had come across HarvestRoad Hive.

When an independent consultant agreed that HarvestRoad Hive met the University’s requirements, Mark and his colleagues gave HarvestRoad Hive a trial. They liked the product and took an initial three year licence on the software.

Installing HarvestRoad Hive on the university’s servers took ‘a few weeks’ and, according to Mark, configuring the system is ‘key’. He added: “We’ve found that it takes a lot of planning to get the repository sorted exactly as you need it – but, for us, the HarvestRoad Hive repository forms the key underpinning link in supporting e-learning as part of the university’s business goals.”

Using HarvestRoad Hive, university staff can now share, re-use and repurpose their content. This will avoid anyone having to ‘reinvent the wheel’, enabling the university’s investment in e-learning content – probably over a million pound’s worth of effort - to be used more effectively.

“In addition, we can use HarvestRoad Hive to hold course-related information – for example, where a work-based mentor can go to a work-based support portal and get relevant resources,” said Mark. “Thus, more than being used merely to develop course material, HarvestRoad Hive can support the entire learning experience.”

Mark, who was an IT manager before taking up his current position, added: “We have been extremely pleased with the responsible attitude and attention to detail that Giunti Labs’ consultants have demonstrated. They are excellent – as, indeed, has been the standard of technical support that Giunti Labs’ staff have given us.

“Working with this company is a joy! It’s the nicest company to deal with that I remember – and I’ve spent all my working life in IT.”

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About Giunti Labs

Giunti is unique in the international publishing industry.

In 1497, Giunti publishers and typographers in Florence, together with others in Venice, began modern book manufacturing. Over the years Giunti has built a 'historical catalogue' of huge dimensions and brands such as Giunti Labs. Giunti Labs, which has its global headquarters in Italy and offices in London (UK), Frankfurt (Germany), Lund (Sweden), Boston (US), as well as Sydney and Perth (Australia), provides a wide range of solutions, in response to any content, learning and knowledge management need, covering:

- Content production
- Technological solutions for content, learning & knowledge management
- Delivery solutions for mobile & wireless
- Consulting and professional services

In 2008, Giunti Labs acquired the HarvestRoad Hive digital repository system, which manages any form of content used in online learning, corporate training and knowledge management initiatives. HarvestRoad Hive can interface with practically any ERP, Learning or Course Management System and is already integrated with several commonly used course management systems, authoring and content assembly tools.

[You can find this press release here](#)