

# Google at SOAS

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Aggregators Wikis Folksonomy User Centered Joy of Use  
Blogs Participation Six Degrees Usability Widgets  
Pagerank XFN Recommendation Social Software FOAF Browser  
Videocasting Podcasting Sharing Collaboration Perpetual Beta Simplicity AJAX  
Audio IM Video Design  
Convergence Web 2.0 CSS Pay Per Click  
UMTS Mobility Atom XHTML SVG Ruby on Rails VC Trust Affiliation  
OpenAPIs RSS Semantic Web Standards SEO Economy  
OpenID Remixability REST Standardization The Long Tail  
DataDriven Accessibility XML  
Modularity SOAP Microformats Syndication

# What is Web 2.0?

- It's the umbrella term for Web-based technologies that aim to facilitate creativity, information sharing and user collaboration
- It is more "evolution" than "revolution", though the speed of evolution may give the impression of a step change
- It's platform agnostic - works the same on Windows, Mac or Linux personal computers
- based on open standards
- maximum benefit gained when user is always on line, but need to have some functionality for off-line use

# About SOAS

1000 staff

4000 students

half of students are postgraduate, recruiting internationally  
strong and growing research programmes

main campus at Russell Square, smaller campus at Vernon  
Square

quirky, collegiate culture

# Needed a replacement email system

- March 2007: User needs and technical requirements identified
- whittled down possible products to Exchange
- detailed design completed for Exchange
- found need for follow-on project to implement Sharepoint
- Google offered their business products free to education
- Google evaluated against specification - ticked all the boxes
- Costing and risk analysis completed:
  - implementation for Google: £100,000 and 12-18 months
  - implementation for Exchange+Sharepoint+storage: £750,000 and 36 months
  - Microsoft known, supported, safe
  - Google relatively unknown, little support, risky

# Decision time

- March 2008: SOAS Executive Board decided to adopt Google Mail and Calendar for staff and students. Contract signed.
- Planning now for go-live by September 2008, starting with Start Page (iGoogle) Mail and Calendar
- Migration of users is expected to be the Big Issue. Not likely to be a Big Bang, but gradual batch transfer to new system
- Expect to turn on Docs and Chat later. Main reason for delaying this is inability to cope with training and support, though also interested in outcomes of Bloomsbury Colleges mini-projects to investigate the impact of Google Docs

# Bloomsbury evaluation of Google Docs

15-month JISC-funded project within the 6 Bloomsbury Colleges (Birkbeck College, Institute of Education, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Royal Veterinary College, SOAS, School of Pharmacy)

1 mini-project per institution to examine (mainly) pedagogical implications of improving collaboration using Google Docs

Reporting findings summer 2009

# Bleeding edge

- SOAS likely to make Google Docs available before the final Bloomsbury Colleges report, but will be interested in the initial observations
- Google will be for all users at SOAS: we see value in staff having same tools as students, especially at postgraduate level, where staff-student collaboration could be useful. Also didn't want an email “class system”
- Dublin Trinity implemented for students Sept 2008, Leeds Metropolitan Uni has implemented for students (Feb 2008), Westminster Uni and Portsmouth Uni seriously evaluating for student use (March 2008), Hammersmith College have signed up (March 2008)

# Demonstration - time permitting

SOAS users will get:

<http://partnerpage.google.com/giggle.soas.ac.uk?hl=en-GB>

Institution administrators will see:

<https://www.google.com/a/cpanel/giggle.soas.ac.uk/Dashboard>

# Conclusions (so far!)

- Web 2.0 offers:
  - new tools you didn't know you needed until you tried them
  - users greater control of data and who accesses it. Should mean greater collaboration and less mediation/control/interference by institution/IT Department
  - technologies will not, currently, scale well to enterprise level
- Web 2.0 needs a change of culture or mindset from centralised to decentralised; from the temptation to limit activities using central control to only using central control where it adds value