

Moodle 2032

A look at the past, present, and future of Moodle, the world's leading open source education platform.

EDITED BY
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MOODLENEWS

INTRODUCTION

As Moodle celebrates its 15th birthday and I look back at my start using Moodle over a decade ago I'm thrilled to see that the community which I originally found to be so inviting, so vibrant, and so exciting to be a part of has only grown and evolved into the largest education focused communities in the world with over 100 million students and teachers either directly or indirectly benefitting from the open source project.

My career has been molded by Moodle over the last decade, alongside internet search and tools like Gmail and Microsoft Office, Moodle has been part of my daily routine interacting with students, teachers, colleagues and creating educational experiences which I think have positively impacted tens of thousands of students at Globalclassroom.us, Medinail.com, and now at StraighterLine.com, all organizations which utilize Moodle as the backbone of the student experience. That one person might contribute to the educational journey of so many is made possible through the amazing open source platform known as Moodle.

Over the last decade, I've witnessed a lot of change in Moodle and its community. Aside from massive growth worldwide, it is a first mover in the mobile space (especially its innovative approach to offline access), it has made major headway for accessibility—an important and oft overlooked feature of learning tools worldwide—it has leaned on 3rd party developers to create and maintain a vastly extensible toolset through its plugins database, and it has adopted innovative approaches to funding itself with an eye to long term sustainability through its partner program, users association, and now institutional investment.

What will the next 15 years bring for Moodle? I've asked some of the best minds in education technology who are familiar with Moodle to comment on this very question and you'll find their answers in the pages that follow.

In my personal opinion? I think the future is as bright as the eponymous orange that's become so familiar.

Joseph Thibault

Founder and editor of Moodlenews.com

QUESTIONS

LAST 15 YEARS

1. What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?
2. What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?
3. What's your fondest Moodle *community* memory? (e.g. story from a Moot, from the forums, meetup, collaboration, etc.)

THE NEXT 15 YEARS

4. What do you think the Moodle community will look like in 15 years?
5. What challenges have remained insufficiently dealt with or unaddressed by Moodle and other LMS?
6. What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

WHO WE REACHED OUT TO:

- Developers
- Moodle Partners
- University level administrators
- Plugin maintainers
- Moodle focused non-partner businesses
- Moodle community members
- Moodle User Association members

OPINIONS

Opinions expressed herein are those of the contributor only and do not express the views or opinions of their respective employers, organizations, or institutions.



GARETH BARNARD

<https://about.me/gjbarnard>

I am an experienced IT practitioner with proven management, problem solving and teaching ability.

I have a passion for software creation and methodologies. My favorite languages at the moment are Java and PHP. I also code in JavaScript, jQuery, jQueryMobile, HTML and CSS. I have coded in VB.Net, C, C++, Modula-2, Ada, Pascal, COBOL, BASIC and 68000 assembler. I find it easy to learn new languages either object orientated or procedural.

I do not believe in a computer problem that cannot be solved, thereby adopting a 'can do' and tenacious attitude.

I enjoy educating on information technology and use this as a medium upon which to pass on my knowledge.

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

Open source learning for all.

What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?

Flexibility, ability to adapt to your "user stories" rather than enforce them all.

What's your fondest Moodle community memory? (e.g. story from a Moot, from the forums, meetup, collaboration, etc.)

More of a general love for the iMoot's and developing plugins that make a positive difference to the educational needs of people.

What do you think the Moodle community will look like in 15 years?

Depends if Moodle survives and adapts to the unexpected challenges of the future.

What challenges have remained insufficiently dealt with or unaddressed by Moodle and other LMS?

For Moodle: Over complicated UI with more than one way to do the same thing. Under the hood code feels like it needs to be optimized through analysis of function calls to ensure most efficient operation. Not quite 'OO' so elements cannot be easily overridden like the login page (might be addressed soon) etc.

For other LMS: Good question, probably not having the ability to keep up with the pace of change in social media that drives the way the UI is used and therefore people expect the same 'ease' of use. All: Not completely knowing what Moodle and others are, so a VLE or a CMS or a classroom replacement or a classroom compliment, therefore if we don't really understand what it is and what it solves then it cannot be designed as well as it can equal user frustration. Additionally, a need to educate course creators to use the full power of the software rather than using it like the old-fashioned directory / file network drive methodology.

What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

The impact of changes to the education system. Thinking that the tool is the solution and can be used to replace directed learning rather than complement it which is a threat as education is a human / human process as one brain educates the other with software being only a tool to help facilitate that but never replace.



STEVE POWELL

<http://moodleassociation.org>

Steve lives in Kendal Cumbria UK and works for Lancaster University where he leads the e-learning team.

In Steve's own words, "I am passionate about providing world class technology enhanced learning that enriches the students educational experience. After graduating with a degree in history from the University of York in the 1990's, I started my career as a librarian, firstly working at the Bodleian Library in Oxford then at a Further Education college in Solihull. It was then that I started to develop my skills as a programmer eventually working as a developer of Lancaster University's Virtual Learning Environment. I have worked at Lancaster for twelve fantastic years and throughout my time here, my focus has been on developing and delivering the best learning experience possible for our students regardless of their location. My team of developers and learning technologists share that ambition and work really hard with educators and students to develop functionality in Moodle that is effective and transformative.

I have been part of the Moodle Users Association since its inception, and currently hold the position of treasurer on its Committee. I am so proud to be part of a wonderful organization dedicated to providing the global Moodle community with a united voice and powerful role in the future development of Moodle. The members are inspiring, and I am fortunate to work with the other committee members who are all so talented, motivated, and fun.

I have two amazing children who light up my world and I am lucky to live near the Lake

District, which is an area of outstanding natural beauty and a world heritage site. I love to go walking in the hills and ride my bike. My other hobbies are Badminton and strumming on my ukulele very badly."

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

Provision of an open online learning tool that is free at the point of delivery. The key words here are open and free. Moodle has enabled education online around the world in part because the bar for entry is so low. At the same time an open environment encourages the whole community to contribute to its ongoing development so individual educators and students continue to benefit from the collective work of the whole global community.

What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?

Tough one but I would say right now it is the grading and feedback functionality for submissions. Providing tools that allows educators to mark online and provide feedback that is relevant and of good quality in a variety of ways makes a significant difference to the student experience. Providing the student with timely feedback means they can react to that feedback before their next submission. Distance learners especially value online feedback because they don't get that one to one contact with their educator.

What is your fondest Moodle community memory?

So many great memories but I would have to say Moodle MOOTs are special. Always leave inspired and I have met so many wonderful people through the MOOT who have become good friends. I think the Moodle community is truly amazing. If I had to be specific, then I would have to ask for two memories. One would be listening to a colleague Gemma Westerhuis talk with real passion about her work with the MUA on the

dashboard project to a small group of Moot attendees. Another would have to be first meeting Aurelie who is now my girlfriend at a MOOT gala

dinner. Not strictly related to the community but a very fond memory.

What do you think the Moodle community will look like in 15 years?

This is a really interesting question and fun to think about. So much of what is done in digital learning now could and probably will be done by Robots in the future. Basic support for students and staff could probably be provided by AI now, and as more data is gathered and shared between computers (who learn very quickly) then it is not inconceivable to think that bots with sophisticated AI will provide complex high-level e-learning support focused on pedagogy. In this brave new world, the role of the community will morph. Less time will be spent directly supporting educators and students, and the focus will be on how we can integrate new ideas and technologies into the VLE in ways that transform how learning is done. This may cause concern for some and the Moodle community may not be as large as it is now, but its membership will give more attention to how technology can change learning and teaching in ways that benefit both teacher and student.

What challenges have remained insufficiently dealt with or unaddressed by Moodle and other LMS?

Common across the sector are issues of engagement and integration. I think assumptions are made about the technical proficiency of students which can mean that training for students in how to use a VLE is not as complete as it ought to be, whilst the VLE itself is not as simple/intuitive to use as it should be. At the same time, we now live in a world where, so many learning resources exist outside of a VLE and are accessed through many more types of devices. A VLE needs to be flexible, able to integrate resources from other systems in a seamless way and on different devices. This is a huge challenge.

What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

The pace of IT development is fast. This is not particularly new but what is different is the pace of

adoption is very fast now. The IT sector is dominated by a handful of giant companies and a proliferation of disruptive startups backed by venture capital which means that new technologies or ideas move rapidly to market. The opportunity for Moodle and all VLEs is being able to make use of new technologies in ways that benefit teaching and learning. I mentioned previously the role of AI. It could be a powerful way

THE PACE OF ADOPTION IS VERY FAST

of engaging students and staff in online learning, helping students discover resources, define concepts, and instantly answer questions. Another example is VR. Microsoft, Google, and Apple are all investing large amounts of money in developing VR technology. This could have a major impact in teaching as the classroom of the future could be entirely virtual. The Moodle community needs to ensure that Moodle can include new developments like this to provide a holistic learning experience. The good news is that Moodle is well placed to face these challenges because it is open. An open source platform is ideally placed to take advantage of new opportunities as they emerge.

Access to source code means more users, including developers of some of these new technologies, can effect meaningful change without having to petition vendors and wait for long lead times before change is enacted. With that flexibility comes risk but if we in the community are proactive then we can make a real difference to how learning is delivered for years to come.



CHRIS KENNIBURG

Webmaster | <https://dearbornschools.org/>

Chris is currently the webmaster for Dearborn Public Schools in Dearborn, Michigan. He provides open source solutions to manage everything from classroom blogging and school sites to online learning for each of the over 2,000 staff and 21,000 students and 32 schools. Using open source software allows everyone access to powerful learning tools that impact classroom instruction and communication with parents. Chris has been involved with Moodle since version 1.6 and has been supporting Moodle in Dearborn Public Schools for over 10 years. During this time, he has been active in the Moodle community contributing several plugins and themes. The most important job and his life's work is focused on raising his 3 kids with his beautiful wife. When not Moodlin' he can be found camping, fishing, and enjoying all the outdoor beauty Michigan has to offer with family and friends.

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

I started using Moodle in a professional capacity in or around the release of Moodle 1.5. Over the last decade the most exciting thing for me was watching

the tremendous growth from 1.9 to 2.0 and then the major leap into the Boost theme and Moodle 3.2. Sustained growth and improvement have been some of the most important accomplishments for Moodle. It truly is a world-wide learning platform with so many talented and dedicated enthusiasts from every language helping to keep up with translations. This is what open source looks like.

IT TRULY IS A WORLD-WIDE LEARNING PLATFORM WITH SO MANY TALENTED AND DEDICATED ENTHUSIAST FROM EVERY LANGUAGE HELPING TO KEEP UP WITH TRANSLATIONS.

What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?

Today, mobile and data analytics are very important. The latest announcements of Moodle mobile are very exciting. The Inspire data and analytics project¹ is just in time when schools and teachers are looking for ways to automate and identify needs and issues in a class. Inspire should help provide real insight into student engagement and help teachers refine and enhance learning activities to better suit student needs. Mobile consumption will only continue to grow. I am skeptical as to how effective a mobile device is for responding and providing more thought than a tweet or Facebook post. However, I think mobile consumption of content is very appealing even for longer text and media to give students time to read and process the materials.

What's your fondest Moodle community memory? (e.g. story from a Moot, from the forums, meetup, collaboration, etc.)

¹ Project Inspire is Moodle's official analytics project <https://moodle.org/course/view.php?id=17233>

I am truly amazed at how people come together to learn, collaborate, and build things for Moodle. The forums have a few key people who are constantly providing help and guidance. Moodle is such a big program. It has grown and morphed over the years and there seems to be a setting or configuration for just about everything and that is just the Moodle app. People do all kinds of weird stuff on servers and there never seems to be a shortage of incorrect file permissions, database connections, and other server issues. And yet in every forum there are people helping. You'd think they would tire of it all but the next day you see them going down the lists helping when they can and making suggestions when they can't. It's really great to see.

What do you think the Moodle community will look like in 15 years?

Looking into the future I hope to see the Moodle community grow here in the United States. We have been using Moodle for over a decade because it is good, it is self-hosted, and we aren't easily distracted every 3 years by the latest and greatest flash in the pan. To get in and use a tool for more than surface level interactions you must spend time and energy learning the tool. That doesn't happen if you are looking at the "top 100 classroom apps" or your school is changing LMS's every 3 years. Long term planning is needed so teachers can sharpen their skills to get to deeper level learning. In the next 15 years I hope to still be using Moodle and nearing retirement!

What challenges have remained insufficiently dealt with or unaddressed by Moodle and other LMS?

The biggest issue I see with Moodle is its age. It's been around for a while and many people who used in prior to 3.0 might have a bad first impression. Many times, server admins failed their users by putting it on old hardware or didn't give it the attention that a central piece of software for learning deserves in a school. Getting people to take another look at Moodle in today's environment is very difficult with so many options. Marketing and an echo chamber is needed to amplify the benefits and uses of Moodle.

**I HOPE TO SEE THE
MOODLE
COMMUNITY GROW
HERE IN THE UNITED
STATES.**



PHIL HILL

e-Literate | mfeldstein.com

Phil Hill (@PhilOnEdTech) is Co-Publisher of the e-Literate blog, Co-Producer of e-Literate TV, and Partner at MindWires Consulting. As a market analyst, Phil has analyzed the growth of technology-enabled change for educational institutions, uncovering and describing the major trends and implications for the broader market. His unique graphics and visual presentations have been widely used in the industry. As an independent consultant, Phil helps educational institutions, technology and content vendors, and policy makers as they consider and implement new initiatives. Phil's clients have included Western Governors University, California Community College System, Iowa State University, Bournemouth University, Pearson Education, Coursera, and others.

Previously Phil was an independent consultant through HBO Systems and Delta Initiative. In addition to e-Literate, Phil has also written for EDUCAUSE Review and Inside Higher Ed, and he has been interviewed and quoted at National Public Radio, Inside Higher Ed, the Chronicle of Higher Education, BuzzFeed Education, and Washington Business Journal.

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

Open source and Moodle are accepted as equals in the institutional LMS space. Prior to 2006, Moodle was viewed as applicable only to a handful of schools with dedicated Moodle staff, or to specific departments, but now no one questions that Moodle (and open source) is a viable option for mission-critical, institutional usage - even without big Moodle staff on hand. Open source has won in that people in education accept it, largely thanks to Moodle.

OK, one more. Much of the second and third world would not have elearning in general were it not for Moodle.

NO ONE QUESTIONS THAT MOODLE (AND OPEN SOURCE) IS A VIABLE OPTION FOR MISSION-CRITICAL, INSTITUTIONAL USAGE

What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?

Because Moodle and open source are viable, the most important attributes for institutional higher ed market are intuitive user experience and ability to be cloud hosted. The extensibility and customization of Moodle are important, but Moodle must be seen as competitive with commercial solutions first before these open source strengths can become apparent to today's users.

What's your fondest Moodle community memory? (e.g. story from a Moot, from the forums, meetup, collaboration, etc.)

At the Colombia Moot in August 2015, there was a flash mob singing group that really made the event feel unique and bring people together.

What do you think the Moodle community will look like in 15 years?

I wish I knew the answer to this. I believe Moodle is at a crossroads, and the future will not be just extension or migration of status quo.

What challenges have remained insufficiently dealt with or unaddressed by Moodle and other LMS?

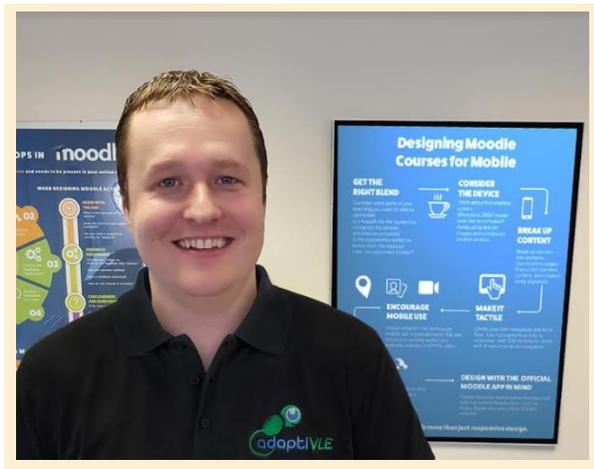
The core LMS design is centered on the course with learners as a secondary consideration. It's not that

there are no features for learner-centric usage, but that the course primacy is holding back the market from dealing with curriculum instead of courses, and with learning outside the classroom. The situation is improving, but current LMSs are still constrained by course designs.

CURRENT LMSS ARE STILL CONSTRAINED BY COURSE DESIGNS.

What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

The ones I've already mentioned. For Moodle, the community and leadership need to understand that open source for open source's sake no longer is sufficient. Moodle must become more competitive with commercial solutions, and Canvas in particular. Intuitive user experience and cloud hosting / scalability. For the future, the big challenge is to move beyond course and better serve learners as individuals central to the learning experience.



Lewis Carr

<http://lewiscarr.co.uk/>

Lewis started Moodle way back in 2004 whilst working at a Further Education college.

In 2007, Moodle became the college's primary LMS platform (replacing Blackboard Learn). Lewis spent the next 5 years leading a team with a dream to push Moodle to its limits, trying out new innovations, cooking up crazy code and implementing striking designs. During this time, Lewis provided help and support to many Further Education Colleges and Universities in the use of Moodle and kept an ongoing blog on the highs and lows of trying new things with Moodle.

In 2013, Lewis left to pursue a career with Moodlerooms before finally launching a start-up called AdaptiVLE Ltd in 2015. The company's primary goal is to have fun with Moodle and do things that others dare not.

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

Simple. A true sense of ownership. Although Moodle owns the trademark and steers the ship, the community owns the project. Everyone involved with Moodle has a stake in it. Over the years we have seen platforms we invested our time into disappear, be it Google Reader or Vine or countless others. We live in a world where we worry whether the cloud service provider who stores our

photos will still be around in a few years, or the app we pour our life into won't vanish overnight or be bought out. With Moodle however, we all know that no matter what happens in the future, we are all going to be OK. If Moodle HQ disappeared overnight, Moodle would live on, the community would rally around, we would fork it, we would be OK. There is a true sense of belonging and ownership.

THE COMMUNITY OWNS THE PROJECT

What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?

APIs and connectors. The work Moodle HQ has done on this area is incredible. The easier it becomes for Moodle to talk to other things and allow other things to talk to it the better.

There are many debates circulating the eLearning world as to whether one actually needs an LMS at all now and that LMS's are in fact dead. Many predict the future lies in xAPI statements and record stores. And that learning resources and courses could be triggered from any platform without an LMS. I don't like the thought of not having an LMS, but I do like the idea of being able to access all Moodle has to offer from something that is not Moodle. For example, someone could code an interface in a non-PHP language and it is still Moodle underneath (like the Moodle app already is and does). We could see tons of cool platforms and innovations here. Imagine Moodle being able to work with Alexa? Taking a quiz via your voice or asking what grade you received on your last assignment? Or accessing resources through your TV in a TED talk type of way, or learning audibly from your car whilst driving?

What's your fondest Moodle community memory? (e.g. story from a Moot, from the forums, meetup, collaboration, etc.)

My fondest memory from the Moodle Community is a personal one, way back in 2008. At this time, I was working at a large college and could not get

enrolments to work via an external database. I was completely stuck, and triggered a bug somewhere. I had tried everything. And the new term was approaching. I was in a panic. I posted an SOS into the Moodle forums and was helped by a fellow Moodler called Alan Barrett. He kindly wrote some code that evening for me to try. I was in awe that someone I didn't know, that I had never met, took time out to help me in my hour of need. This for me, shows just how truly amazing the Moodle community is and I will never forget the help Alan gave me. We posted the fix back in the forum and the tracker.

What do you think the Moodle community will look like in 15 years?

I think we will all be visiting Moodle Moots from our sofas wearing headsets staring at a hologram of Martin Dougiamas drinking virtual Mojitos wearing shoes with self-tying laces. Just kidding. I do however think it may be a lot of the same people involved today, just older, wiser, and slightly greyer than we are today. I'm not sure we are going to see as many new "young blood" teachers in the community from developed countries where Moodle has previously dominated. The Moodle community was built on a generation of teachers with a passion for eLearning and a budget of zero and a desire to share. Nowadays, teachers have access to many more resources, tools, and platforms than ever before, Moodle is just another part of what they do, so there is less need for them to focus on Moodle in the same way we all did.

What we will see is a huge influx of users from say Latin America and other markets where eLearning is still emerging, such as India and Africa. This will become the "new Moodle Community", a new generation of hungry Moodlers eager to share and improve.

What challenges have remained insufficiently dealt with or unaddressed by Moodle and other LMS?

In my opinion, the biggest challenge faced by Moodle, is Moodle itself, well the connotations of the name at least. Let me explain.

When I go to non-Moodle eLearning events and conferences, the word "Moodle" is often scoffed at, almost sniggered upon as an old, outdated platform by those that know little about it. This is because of the preconception that Moodle is still like the platform most people wrestled with many years ago.

Back in 2007, here in the UK, Apple ran a series of television ads comparing Macs to PCs (www.youtube.com/watch?v=4B4Z2OY9MQg). Macs were portrayed as edgy and cool, whereas PCs were stuffy, slow, and unreliable. And this is how many people see Moodle vs the new breed of LMS platforms today. Canvas is cool and Mac-like, Moodle is wrongly perceived as clunky and slow, like Windows 2000. This couldn't be further from the truth, however, because Moodle has been in the game so long, many have tired of it, and because so many users were do-it-yourselfers and made a real mess of it (poorly configured servers and dull courses) now seek refuge on the newer cloud-based, always on, never fail solutions we have become accustomed to in 2017.

Therefore, Moodle's biggest challenge is convincing all those ex-Moodle users to come back and reconsider Moodle and also convincing current users to stay and not be swayed to try something else, as once they leave, it's almost impossible to get them back.

Many people don't realize just what Moodle can do and just how awesome it is. And this is because Moodle is not a corporate beast with unlimited swag and funky advertising. Moodle has remained humble in its vision and marketing and unfairly takes a bashing from both the press and the sector.

What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

The Community need to know where Moodle is heading and that it still aligns to their vision and goals, Moodle HQ does a great job at doing this. However, the needs of the market change rapidly and Moodle needs to ensure it stays relevant. There are some community based plugins and themes that

play a pivotal role in many people choosing or keeping Moodle, some regard these as important, if not more important than some the core features themselves. There is so much innovation happening here.

The biggest challenge we have today is building things that don't require manuals or training to use. So, all new innovations and the Moodle platform itself need to be so intuitive to the end user that training and other barriers to use simply disappear. If developers can crack this, and make the usability as intuitive as the other web platforms the masses use today then Moodle will remain. Simplification is key here. Moodle is making great strides here, but these things take time and every change can affect millions of users so it's not an easy task. However, it may need to happen quickly.

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HUNGRY MOODLERS EAGER
TO SHARE AND IMPROVE.**



JUSTIN HUNT

Developer | <http://www.poodll.com>

Justin is creator and developer of PoodLL, a series of plugins for Moodle, the learning management system. It adds features such as audio and video recording, whiteboards which students can submit drawings and annotations from, and components like stopwatches and flashcards.

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

Without a doubt, it is bringing online education and all its benefits to students right across the world. It's the Moodle community members who have driven adoption in so many institutions. The teacher has a need that Moodle can fulfill and just gets started. Then it takes off like some sort of beneficial virus and pretty soon the whole place is running Moodle.

What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?

It is still really the basic features in my opinion, html editor, assignments, quizzes, gradebook, backup and restore. But a close second would be the ability to extend Moodle functionality with plugins. The modular architecture of Moodle enables rapid adaptability to new technology and innovation in pedagogy and technology. And more simply it allows users to contribute to Moodle, tailor it to their needs and make it their own.

What's your fondest Moodle community memory? (e.g. story from a Moot, from the forums, meetups, collaboration, etc.)

For several years I attended the Moodle Moot in Japan and often felt anonymous there. People would regularly approach charismatic smooth-talking Thom Rawson thinking he was me, the Poodll Guy. So, I announced to my friends in the Moot foyer, that I was going to make a splash this year. Almost immediately a Moot organizer in a suit, started walking around the room calling my name. It turned out my Moot fee payment had bounced.

What do you think the Moodle community will look like in 15 years?

How the Moodle community evolves is going to be a function of how Moodle evolves. I think that more Moodle development will take place in commercial entities. I think that one or more forks of Moodle will develop and compete. I think that a large corporate will become involved. The question "What is Moodle?" will be harder to answer. Because of this the community as we know it will splinter accordingly and become less focused on Moodle the thing, and more focused on pedagogy, usage and sharing. And we will all be wearing metallic jump suits.

What challenges have remained insufficiently dealt with or unaddressed by Moodle and other LMS?

I think Moodle and other LMSs are doing pretty well. However, I do think that no LMS has yet developed a user interface that appeals to very young learners, i.e. pre-literate children. Similarly, illiterate learners could benefit greatly by interfaces that rely less on text.

What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

Those who know me will be waving their tissues and rolling their eyes ("here we go..."). I think that Moodle is now such a vital component in the operation of educational institutions and organizations globally, that the scarcity of commercially supported and developed plugins is surprising. Institutions have to rely on plugins that may or may not support new versions of Moodle

and have no recall in the event of a bug or urgent need. As a result, there is reluctance to use plugins and heavy reliance on Moodle partners for plugin development or provision.

Partners obviously cannot support every plugin a user might want, and many Moodle sites are not hosted with partners anyway. I think a visible commitment to some sort of plugins marketplace, with strict standards would encourage innovation from developers and provide better support options to Moodle users.

**HOW THE MOODLE
COMMUNITY EVOLVES IS
GOING TO BE A FUNCTION OF
HOW MOODLE EVOLVES.**



STUART MEALOR

<http://www.elearningworld.org>

Stuart is interested in all things e-learning, with specific interests in Moodle, HTML5, e-learning strategy, and business development. He is main host of the Free Moodle Podcast (available on iTunes and SoundCloud), and auto of Using Moodle in Organizations (Amazon and Apple Store). His experience in education over 30 years, MBA in International Business, and knowledge of e-learning systems implementation, together with graphic design background, give him a unique skill set for e-learning projects. Stuart has been Managing Director of HRDNZ (certified Moodle Partner) since 2006, and Moodle Certification Manager. Stuart has been a keynote, presenter, and organizer at more than 20 Moodle Moot conferences worldwide, and he lives in New Zealand with his partner Sophie, and daughters Emily and Olivia.

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

In the early days, I might have said making Open Source a viable option for an LMS. But realistically that battle is now won. [Free and open source software] doesn't scare people anymore, and the huge benefits of this openness are generally understood.

The Moodle community is such a huge concept. Do we mean the people on moodle.org? Do we mean every teacher that uses it? Do we mean the developers and the decision-makers who adopt it?

Each group has their own needs and desires, and they can be very different. A community of school teachers, is different to a community of university professors, which is different to a group of multimedia designers, which is different to a group of non-for-profit or commercial course providers.

Luckily Moodle has the Tracker, where anyone can add a feature request or enhancement and report bugs. However, it's only a very small percentage of people that use this. I'm still amazed by the variety and depth of discussions in the moodle.org forums, which I could read for an hour every day and still not keep on top of. I am still surprised every week by the generosity of contributors who help others - probably more than any other online community I belong to.

What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?

If I think about why organizations might adopt Moodle, ultimately, it's because it's a secure, scalable solution, containing a variety of useful teaching tools - a mature product with good documentation and a supportive community.

Exactly which features are most important to you depends largely on who you are. For some it will be the reporting tools, for others the quiz engine, for others the mobile capabilities.

The requirement for Moodle to be the best solution in very diverse situations does create tension. The various Moodle spin-offs have tried to address this, by tailoring to specific situations. Can Moodle be everything to everyone? Well it can, but it has to put a lot of work into making the interface sensible and appropriate for all uses. It does a reasonably good job given how complex and sophisticated in it.

What's your fondest Moodle community memory? (e.g. story from a Moot, from the forums, meetup, collaboration, etc.)

Heading up a Moodle Partner company for the past 11 years has meant Moodle is fairly and squarely at the centre of my professional life. It's been a roller-coaster at times, with good and bad, but mainly good. Without doubt the most enjoyable part has

been involvement with Moodle Moots. I'm lucky enough to have been keynote / presenter / organizer of more than 30 Moodle Moots around the world including USA, Canada, Oman, Greece, Italy, Spain, Romania, and of course here in Australia and New Zealand.

If I could offer one single piece of advice to every Moodle user, whether you are a new or experienced teacher, designer, technologist, administrator, or developer it is: "Get to a Moodle Moot!" They are simply irreplaceable for new ideas, networking, updates, and they will recharge your enthusiasm batteries like nothing else can do. Listen to people, learn from them, share your own experiences and questions, get involved. For those of us who spend far too much time in front of computer screens, taking the time to interact with our peers at a Moodle Moot is invaluable. We are human, we are social animals, and there is nothing quite like the joy of being in your family flock of birds that are all moving in the same direction :-)

What do you think the Moodle community will look like in 15 years?

I am always reticent to gaze into the future and make predictions. History is littered with predictions that seem so ridiculous in retrospect, and especially when they are related to any type of technology, which moves so quickly. However, let's not let history put us off!

The Moodle community has indeed changed over the last 15 years. The early days were dominated by enthusiastic open-source developers and teachers, all keen to get involved, have input, and share. To some extent, the Moodle User Association has professionalized this group, and provided a more formalized network for this type of user.

The Moodle.org community has grown to millions of registered users. And the forums often feel like the wild west, with questions from newbies and experts intermingled. There are some amazing PHMs (Particularly Helpful Moodlers) who do a stunning job of supporting others, for free in their own time.

But we also have to remember that many users of Moodle are consumers with little or no emotional

tie to the platform. They treat Moodle like they treat their Word Processing application or Email client, and just want it to work, and get frustrated when a menu item changes location, or a term such as Home, becomes My Home, becomes Dashboard.

So, the Moodle community isn't just the enthusiasts and evangelists, importantly it's also the teacher at the coal-face who just wants to get things done quickly and easily. Can we engage these people more? Some of them, maybe. But we also need to accept that the user community is extremely diverse, and just wants a tool that works.

What challenges have remained insufficiently dealt with or unaddressed by Moodle and other LMS?

That's a big question isn't it? If I take the perspective of an end-user, a consumer of online education and training, I might be reasonably happy. I can access my courses from just about any computer with a browser, and doing the same on my tablet or smartphone gets easier almost by the month.

Although Moodle has a strong set of built-in activities, I think it needs more. Although a highly skilled teacher might integrate SCORM, LTI, and HTML5 in their courses, for 99% of teachers they just use the tools in Moodle. Moodle has made mistakes here.

- No core Certificate module ... really? In a learning environment!
- Feedback module included in core but hidden by default for years. A project to combine Survey, Feedback, Questionnaire to create what would be a stunning activity ... still in discussion after many years.
- A Chat system that seems old-fashioned compared to our modern-day experiences on mobile phones.
- A fantastic Quiz system, that can't share questions with the equally fantastic Lesson activity.

The point is, for many teachers, the core activities of Moodle are 'why they love it'. So new activities, maybe one a year, could help the average teacher

make the average course more flexible, varied, and engaging.

Oh, and Moodle needs a better reporting engine built-in. Although some people will be able to use plugins, SQL queries, and other ways of extracting data, Moodle would benefit so much from a reporting overhaul, generating site level reports easily and flexibly, without the overhead of integrating another software application to do this.

What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

I'm sure most people will refer to mobile learning here. And for those with small budgets, expensive or restricted internet access, and limited to smartphones, then this is indeed vital. However, I think the real challenges are still around the concepts of how we make online learning as engaging, successful, and meaningful as traditional face-to-face, on-the-job, and other forms of more traditional social learning.

For Moodle, one of the challenges is certainly how it responds to the competitors. Even though in most cases the products they have are lesser, the reality is they have marketing machines and drivers which operate in the commercial space far more successfully than Moodle. It's a sad reality that many company Directors and HR managers are influenced in their decisions by 'what looks good' (because they often don't have the time to scratch below the surface or dig down into what the LMS is really going to deliver). Moodle 'out-of-the-box' still looks plain compared to others, even after all these years and many theme overhauls and changes of direction.

ACTUALLY A GOOD THING.

So, is Moodle going to continue to be successful over the next 15 years? Of course it is. Will it remain the dominant LMS? Maybe. But we should remember that competition is actually a good thing. It forces the product to develop, to change, to react, and to be proactive. Ultimately Moodle will continue to be the best choice for most situations, and maintain its market share, in an ever growing LMS market.

**WE SHOULD
REMEMBER THAT
COMPETITION IS**



RON OLSEN

Chief Executive Officer Remote-Learner | <https://www.remote-learner.com/about/>

Ron Olsen is CEO of Remote-Learner, a provider of effective and engaging open source-based digital learning environments to thousands of universities, schools, and corporate training clients throughout North America since 2002. Prior to his tenure with Remote-Learner, Ron had twenty years of business management, finance and operational leadership roles in the education, technology, and finance sectors. Ron holds a BA in Business Economics, has taught Entrepreneurship at Metropolitan State University of Denver, and is an avid supporter of educational, non-profit, and entrepreneurial initiatives in his community.

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

The establishment of an Open Source LMS as a viable option for the education community, bringing together thousands of developers and educators to build not only a stronger core product, but an ecosystem of plug-ins and integrated product offerings.

What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?

The most important feature is not a specific feature, but the modular nature of the platform, allowing for the open source community development of

additional features and functionality to solve all manner of new challenges.

What's your fondest Moodle community memory? (e.g. story from a Moot, from the forums, meetup, collaboration, etc.)

My very first MoodleMoot in the UK, assembling members of our US, Canadian and UK teams, to connect with, and learn from, other long-time members of the Moodle community, many of whom I count as friends today.

What do you think the Moodle community will look like in 15 years?

There are already many methods for participating in the Moodle community, whether the Moodle User Association, service providers in the Moodle space, individual contributions to the development community or the new Premium Integrator Program. I believe that the community will continue to grow, with more interest from those outside the Moodle community given the growth of integrations with other parts of digital learning environments.

What challenges have remained insufficiently dealt with or unaddressed by Moodle and other LMS?

Easy, intuitive ways to extend the functionality of the LMS. Moodle offers a lot (some might argue too many) of plugins, and the ability to configure/customize, but it is not intuitive for most admins to do themselves. Other LMSs are generally locked down with a take it or leave it solution in terms of features and minimal configuration and integration options. The pendulum needs to find its home somewhere in the middle, with more guided assistance on how to solve real problems, without mandates on exactly how to do so. Today's users know better what they want from their LMS and with change becoming increasingly easier they are motivated to find the solution that is right for them.

What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know

about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

I think many of the challenges are being actively discussed in the forums and in articles by folks like Michael Feldstein at e-Literate, including the need to identify those specific areas that will improve future adoption rates of the platform and the ongoing balancing act between the role of Moodle HQ and the rest of the community for future direction and development.



JASON HARDIN

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jasonhardin/>

Jason is a senior product manager at Blackboard (a Moodle Partner) working on their [Moodlerooms product](#). He has been working in education for 15 years and been involved in administering and developing for Moodle for 10 years. Jason has a passion for accessibility and helps run the [Moodle Collaborative Accessibility Group](#). He has also been active in Moodle Community projects as well as the [Moodle Users Association](#) as an individual member.

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

The global expansion of Moodle is the biggest accomplishment of the community. By community members contributing their time, expertise and ideas to each other, they have made Moodle a global phenomenon.

What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?

The assignment module is the most important feature of Moodle to me. This one activity demonstrates all of the potential of activities in Moodle. The assignment module has the most pluggability of any activity in Moodle. It implements advanced grading, feedback and submission types, blind marking, and grading workflows. It demonstrates the most complex options for grading. If all activities had the same grading functionality as

the assignment module, Moodle would have the most flexibility in assessing and grade a student's understanding of a subject.

What's your fondest Moodle community memory? (e.g. story from a Moot, from the forums, meetup, collaboration, etc.)

Some of my fondest memories of the Moodle community come from the Mountain Moot that is held at Carroll College in Helena Montana each year. Every year it is a Moot to remember and I recommend attending it to anyone I talk to even those not in the Moodle community. Dan Case and Ryan Hazen put on a very comfortable, energetic, and friendly Moot every year and I always look forward to attending. If Blackboard ever requires me to only pick one conference to go to a year I would go to this one. I really wish there were more Moots in the US like this because you really get to know people and make connections.

**MY FONDEST
MEMORIES OF THE
MOODLE
COMMUNITY COME
FROM THE
MOUNTAIN MOOT
THAT IS HELD AT
CARROLL COLLEGE IN
HELENA MONTANA
EACH YEAR.**

What do you think the Moodle community will look like in 15 years?

I would expect the Moodle community to become even more global over the next 15 years. I see countries that are currently in the beginning to middle of their understanding of how to implement Moodle becoming stronger and stronger contributing members to the Moodle discussions. I see this continuing to drive Moodle's global perspective of education. I also think that the Moodle community will continue to use Moodle to push the boundaries of education by customizing it to support new and different educational methodologies as global education continues to figure out what is the most efficient way to educate the populace.

What challenges have remained insufficiently dealt with or unaddressed by Moodle and other LMS?

Grading workflows continue to be the area with the most potential for improvement. It's also one of the most-used workflows, so any improvement here impacts quite a few users. I think grading activities can be made more consistent and efficient in future releases of Moodle. Creating a consistent set of grading features for all assessments and a consistent grading interface will be one of the most important improvements in teacher efficiency in Moodle.

What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

I think the biggest challenge that hasn't hit full force is competencies and standards. Most institutions are still in the investigation stage, and that investigation usually relies on grades for an activity to determine if a student has met a competency or not. I think in the future institutions will do away with grades all together and will instead want to evaluate a student's evidence of competency and assign the competency directly. In Moodle, right now that workflow is a lot harder to execute than grading an activity is. Everything that is currently associated with grades in Moodle will need to work with

competencies and work in a flow that is efficient and convenient for a teacher and student.



EMMA RICHARDSON

<http://edconsulting.org/>

Emma Richardson has worked with the Moodle platform for about 8 years. She runs a Distance Learning program that serves 17 K-12 school districts in eastern Colorado using video conferencing to connect students with teachers and college level programming with a Moodle site as support. Emma is very active on the Moodle forums and has earned the Particularly Helpful Moodle designation for the past few years. Emma was invited to be a committee member with the Moodle User's Association when it was founded and has remained on the committee since then. This year, she was nominated as Chair and is honored to be able to continue serving the Association.

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

I would have to say that the community itself is the greatest thing that has been accomplished. I have yet to find such a vibrant and diverse group of people all united by a single platform. The strength that Moodle has is its support. I would argue that the community provides better support than the majority of paid solutions out there.

What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?

I do not believe that is a question that can be answered because Moodle is so many things to so many different communities. It is used by K-12,

Higher Ed, Healthcare, Government, small business, to name but a few and each area has different needs. The fact that these are all met in a single platform is remarkable and the fact that the platform is open source is even more remarkable. If I had to pick a single item, I would say that ease of use is pretty universal, and I have been happy to see a lot of focus on that recently.

What's your fondest Moodle community memory? (e.g. story from a Moot, from the forums, meetup, collaboration, etc.)

Goodness, there are so many! I will pick one from my favorite Moot - the Mountain Moot in Helena, Montana. The first year I attended, a group of presenters (myself included) were being driven around by one of the interns at the college. (I believe we were going from one bar to another!) First you have to picture six adult presenters (in a very jolly mood) and one college intern crammed in the tiniest of cars. I was in the front with another lady sitting on my lap. Three guys were stuffed in the back seat and two more in the trunk! We pulled up to a traffic light and one of guys in the trunk yelled out "Chinese Fire drill."

Being the dutiful person that I am and as I always follow instructions (wink, wink!), I reached for the car door handle - at which point, the previously very quiet intern proceeded to read me the riot act and told me that I was not allowed to move an inch and that no-one would be running around the vehicle. We still laugh about that night and of course claim that the mature adults in the car were way more fun than the college student!!

THE STRENGTH THAT MOODLE HAS IS ITS SUPPORT. I WOULD ARGUE THAT THE COMMUNITY PROVIDES BETTER SUPPORT THAN THE

MAJORITY OF PAID SOLUTIONS OUT THERE.

What do you think the Moodle community will look like in 15 years?

I hope that it will not change much. We have a great community right now and I see that as an indicator of success of the product. Hopefully the community will maintain or grow alongside the product and never forget its open source nature.

What challenges have remained insufficiently dealt with or unaddressed by Moodle and other LMS?

I see the biggest challenge currently is how to balance simplicity with functionality. Moodle has functionality down but still struggles with the simplicity part. It is a no win situation really. People want to be able to do everything but also want it to be very easy. The current way that developers are dealing with that is to hide functionality behind pretty buttons but that really only creates more clicks to accomplish things and also makes it harder to find the features that you need. I think that customizable menus could help a lot here - for example, the Fordson theme currently has the option to add a customized section of most used activities and resources that pin to the top of the activity picker.

Other popular LMS's sacrifice functionality for simplicity. This is proving to be very attractive to teachers initially and explains a shift to these sort of platforms. However, I believe that those same teachers will become frustrated by the functional gaps eventually and will either demand more from the product they have or move to a more robust existing product.

What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

Online education is growing at an exponential rate and LMS's need to react to that. When the consumer base grows, it creates a lot more

competition as more companies decide that they want a part of that market. As Google and Microsoft come to the table with some sort of classroom module, the full-fledged LMS's need to find a way to make themselves more attractive to their target audience. Social media is not going to go away and that needs to be integral to the product. Collaboration and community need to be so embedded that students hardly realize that they are online. It all comes back to relationships - if a product designed to connect teachers with students cannot do that successfully and help forge the relationship between them, then it will not last.

GEMMA LESTERHUIS

Independent Moodle site administrator and consultant | www.ltnc.nl

Before Gemma started her own company LT&C she worked as an Moodle site administrator and IT project manager for Euroforum B.V. As an independent Moodle site administrator and consultant, she supports a variety of organizations with their work and ambitions around Moodle. Gemma considers herself to be part of a lively Moodle Community. In this community she works together with Moodle community developers and the Moodle User Association with as goal to improve Moodle.

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

Looking back on Moodle, I think one of the single most important things that the Moodle community has accomplished is to voice out their opinion in such a way that it cannot be longer ignored.

By uniting that voice the voice became strong and powerful. And this voice can grow into even a stronger one in the next 15 years. But this voice is just a voice if we did not have Moodle's greatest feature of all. The "MOO" in Moodle (Modular Object Orientated) made sure that the community has the power to be the necessary guiding system for Moodle HQ.

But keeping the MOO will be a challenge. By taking it out or making it less. Moodle will be on her way to turn more and more into a standard learning environment. And it will be harder to compete with other LMS and it will become more difficult to be in lead of new technology.

What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

The challenge for Moodle—and its community—will be in finding a balance. A balance in being innovative and staying flexible and compatible with other devices. Without turning into an administrative technological nightmare for Moodle developers. But

still giving site administrators and teachers the options to choose what THEY think is best for their students.

Moodle should stay close to its own community. Where it is not about the country, institute, or department you represent. Instead it cares about your ideas, thoughts, and motivations.

A Moodle that will make you feel welcome. A place where we challenge each other, with the necessary respect. WITH only one goal in mind – to make sure Moodle will stay in tune with the user's needs without just following the crowd but by thinking ahead and staying our self.

**MOODLE SHOULD STAY
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OR DEPARTMENT YOU
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IDEAS, THOUGHTS, AND
MOTIVATIONS.**



HIDETO HARASHIMA

Moodle Association of Japan | <https://moodlejapan.org>

Hideto is a professor of English and Linguistics at Maebashi Institute of Technology in Japan. He started using Moodle for his lessons as early as 2004. He is a winner of one of Japan e-Learning Awards 2014 for his practice of teaching with Moodle. He was a founding president of Moodle Association of Japan and had presided over the organization for seven years until March 2017. He had served on the ten-member steering committee of Moodle Users Association for two years since inauguration.

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

This may be rather personal and local, but the establishment of the Moodle Association of Japan was the most important community event to me. We have created a model of numerous things: collecting membership fees for supporting the running of Moodle HQ, organizing local MoodleMoots, holding hands-on workshops, giving out awards and grants to Moodle-related good practices, publishing newsletters and Moodle research journals, offering a place for local Moodlers to socialize and network, and bridging the linguistic and spatial gap between the local community and the HQ. This I believe has inspired the creation of Moodle Users Association of today and other local users' associations.

What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?

I think Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) is the most important and promising feature of Moodle. With LTI any Moodle activity, or even a course, can be accessed and exploited from a remote Moodle installation. This can replace a course sharing hub, and in fact Moodle Community Hub is turning into Moodle.net by utilizing LTI. LTI theoretically allows Moodlers around the world to easily share their Moodle contents.

What's your fondest Moodle community memory? (e.g. story from a Moot, from the forums, meetup, collaboration, etc.)

My fondest memory of Moodle community is Irene Button Campaign. Don Hinkelman and I started this fund-raising campaign in 2005 and it lasted until September 2008. As many as 322 individuals and organizations from around the world donated 50 or more dollars during this campaign, and I sent to each of them an Irene Button as a token of thanks. This was the most heart-warming memory of the Moodle community.

What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

In the next 15 years, I hope Moodle and the Moodle community become more multilingual. Because English is the dominant language of any aspect of Moodle operation, the Japanese — or any other minority language — Moodlers cannot enjoy the full benefits of using Moodle or joining the Moodle community.

There are a few volunteer translators working very hard every day, but Moodle development is so fast and wide that they cannot catch up with the progress. In the future, I hope Moodle become capable of automatic translation so that there will be no need for volunteer translators of Moodle docs or forum posts.



DON HINKELMAN

Don Hinkelman teaches English and intercultural communication at Sapporo Gakuin University. He has used Moodle in blended classes and mass online testing since 2003 and worked over ten years as a founding officer of the Moodle Association of Japan. Co-author of ten custom plugins, he has also contributed over twenty Moodle courses for open content distribution on the Moodle Association of Japan Hub. Don's research book, "Blending Technologies in Second Language Classrooms" covers the theory of learning ecologies in blended environments using the open source Moodle LMS.

What is the single most important thing the Moodle community has accomplished in the last 15 years?

The Moodle community has built a committed, passionate group of teachers who feel they own their own system and can change it as they see fit.

What features are most important to Moodle today, in your opinion?

For me, "questions" are the most important part of learning, and it is the Question Bank that is most important to me. I also like the transparent features that help students see their own progress, like Attendance, Progress Bar, Gradebook, Activity Reports, Badges, and Portfolios. Custom plugins such as the Reader Module and Video Assessment help my students assess their own library reading and performances such as presentation making.

What's your fondest Moodle community memory? (e.g. story from a Moot, from the forums, meetup, collaboration, etc.)

Every year, 200-300 teachers gather for the MoodleMoot Japan conference in Tokyo or other

cities in Japan. I love the parties with sake drinking and yaki-tori barbecue that happen in the evenings. These are teachers who love education and it is inspiring to hear them tell stories of great projects they are involved in.

What do you think the Moodle community will look like in 15 years?

I would like to see a network of several hundred national or statewide Moodle Associations of teachers, researchers, and developers. I hope Moodle becomes the de facto standard of learning across the world.

What challenges have remained insufficiently dealt with or unaddressed by Moodle and other LMS?

The Question Bank is very old and has many deep bugs and design problems that are over ten years old on the Tracker. It needs a complete overhaul that allows easy sharing among teachers in a school and across institutions. Commercial publishers need a way to distribute and sell materials via Moodle.

What are future needs/requirements that the community and developers should know about? Or reworded: what are upcoming challenges yet to materialize in full force?

I think the new Moodle.Net that Martin envisions is a fundamental, disruptive innovation that will get like-minded teachers to collaborate to build shareable, multimedia materials that may challenge the publishing industry.

**I HOPE MOODLE
BECOMES THE
DEFACTO STANDARD
OF LEARNING ACROSS
THE WORLD.**

<http://moodlenews.com>

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