The Open University

Open edX Out of Context

The Open University Approach

Life-changing Learning

Who are we?

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project Minerva

Part of the Minerva Team, The Open University, UK

The Open University

Established in 1969 as a distance learning and research university.

One of the largest UK Universities, over 100,000 students

- 4 out of 10 part-time undergraduate students in the UK study with us, and 76% of our students study alongside work.

“Open to people, places, methods and ideas”

- Most of our undergraduate degrees have no formal entry requirements.
- Age range 13 to 90
- We have significant numbers of disabled students - around 20% of our students have disabilities or additional requirements.

Read more: http://www.open.ac.uk/

Our Open edX courses

Final year undergraduate degree courses:

S309 Earth Processes

W340 Law, Society and Culture

A329 The Making of Welsh History

Postgraduate courses:

L801 Introduction to Translation Theory and Practice

L802 Translation in Practice

L803 Extended translation project/dissertation

Angela: S309 (Earth processes) 1st Open University use case

S309 Earth processes

- 600 hours of study (theory and skills) over 9 months
- Complex geology course, media and graphics rich
- 50% of final year of bachelors
- Fully assessed (35 hours + project)

Twitter: @S309geology

Wanaka, New Zealand © Angela Coe

The challenges

- Capturing academic creativity and passion in an online distant teaching environment
- Designing for digital delivery
- Excellent pedagogy
- Engaging and supporting students for 9 months…

Rigid structure

Flexibility so the course is driven by the content

Open edX

What did it feel like?

Some facts: staff

- 18 authors (6 core and 12 guest)
- 4 support staff with access
- 11 tutors/ instructors (Beta tester status)

Some of the S309 team

Some facts: staff feedback

- Empowered
- Can release creative powers
- Asked to join the team

Enjoyed their work

I have seen the energy in the room and it is down to how reinvigorated they have been
(STEM management)

The immediacy has lots of advantages, <u>one is to empower the author</u>; …….you can create it the way you want to see it without having to go through anyone else.

(Author)

Authoring: opportunities

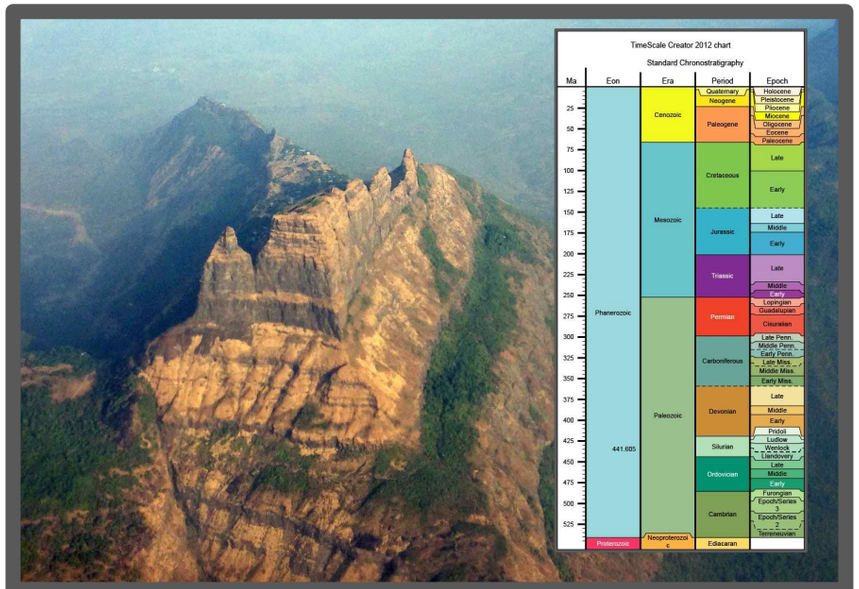
- **Direct collaborative authoring**
  - author voice
  - experimentation and iteration is easy
  - catalyst for each other
  - easily share ideas anytime
  - develop pedagogy
  - more authentic for testers/course assessors
  - improved communication

Provide:
1. author tools
2. right environment
3. flexible platform

- **Proactive management of people and workflow**

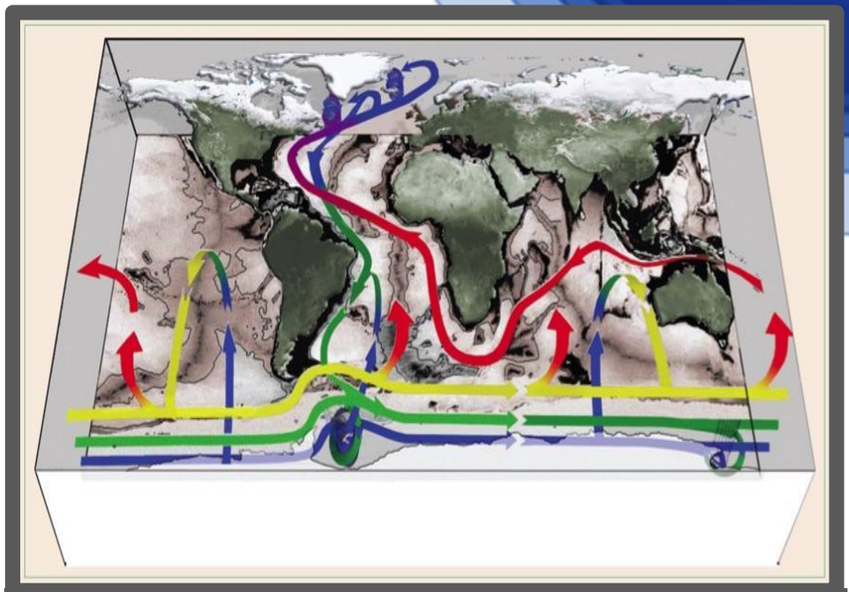
- **Access to html, the ‘toybox’, and flexible structure**
  - play learn
  - study sessions

S309 structure

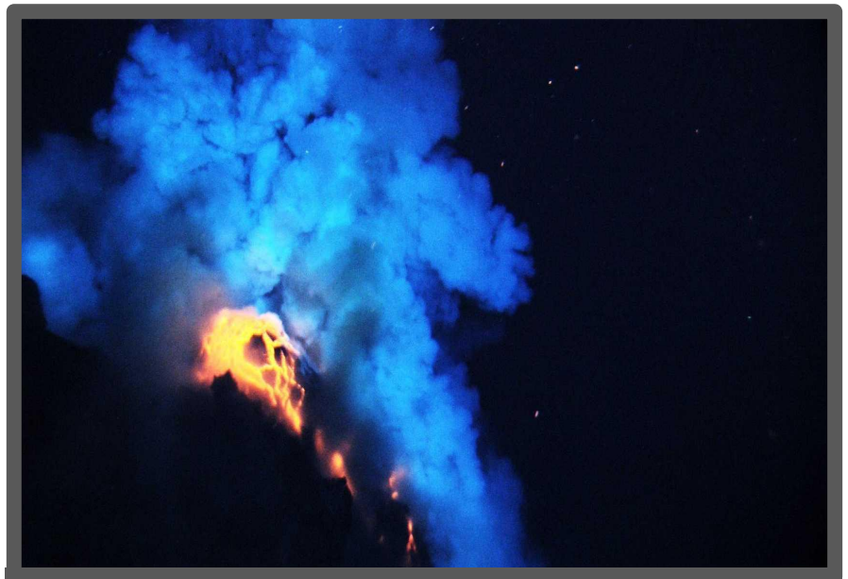


Events in Earth history
Weeks 1-5, assessment 1

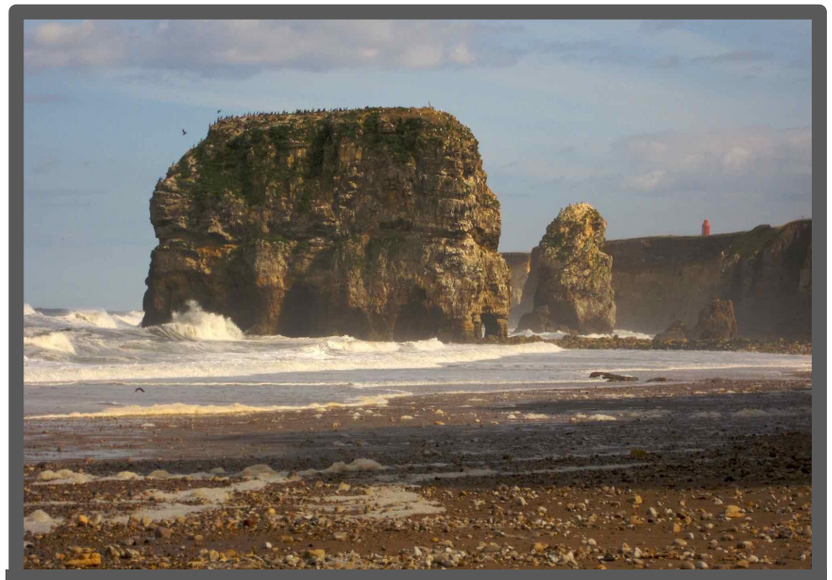
Mountains
Weeks 6-10, assessment 2



Oceans
Weeks 11-15 assessment 3



Volcanoes & remote obs.
Weeks 16-20, assessment 4



Sediments & sea-level
Weeks 21-25, assessment 5

Earth science in society
Weeks 26-30, project

S309 study sessions

section

Mountains

Weeks 6-10, TMA02

Week 6 | Week 7 | Week 8 | Week 9 | Week 10

sub section

Assess

unit

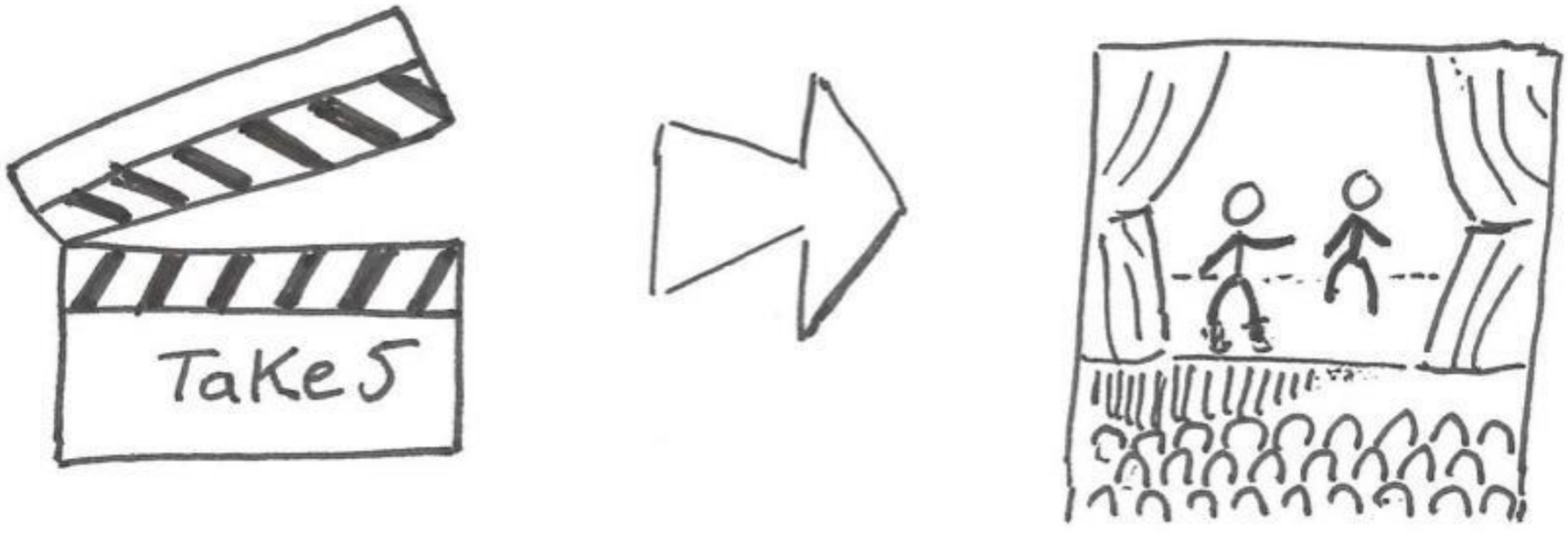
Study session = 1 webpage = collection of blended learning assets that ideally the student studies in one session

- Makes natural breaks, forms a ‘pedagogical package’

Authoring: live updates

- Co-creation
- Tailored optional support
- Scientific updates and breaking news

Poll: 1% of students would prefer it not to change

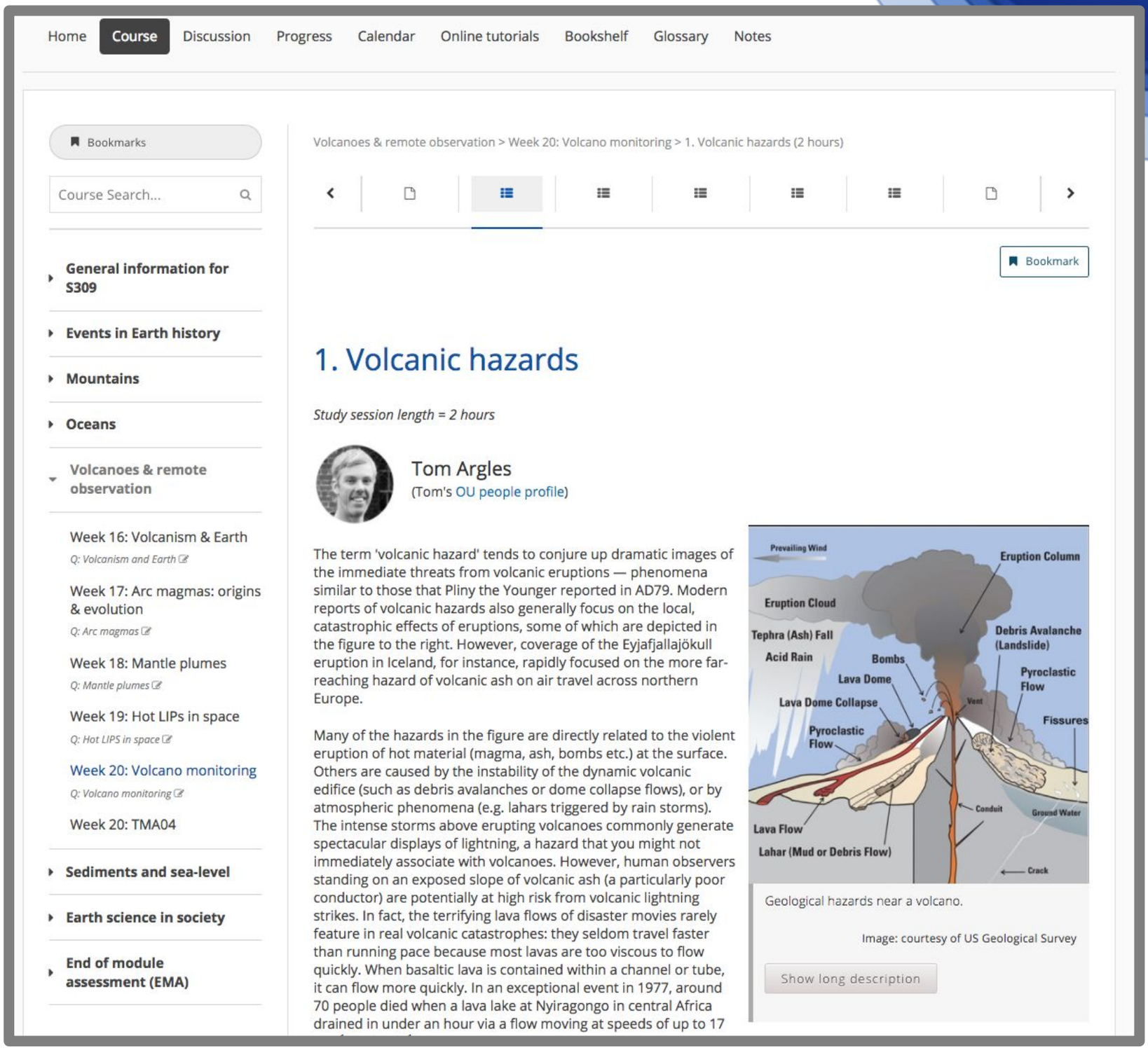


Authoring: challenges

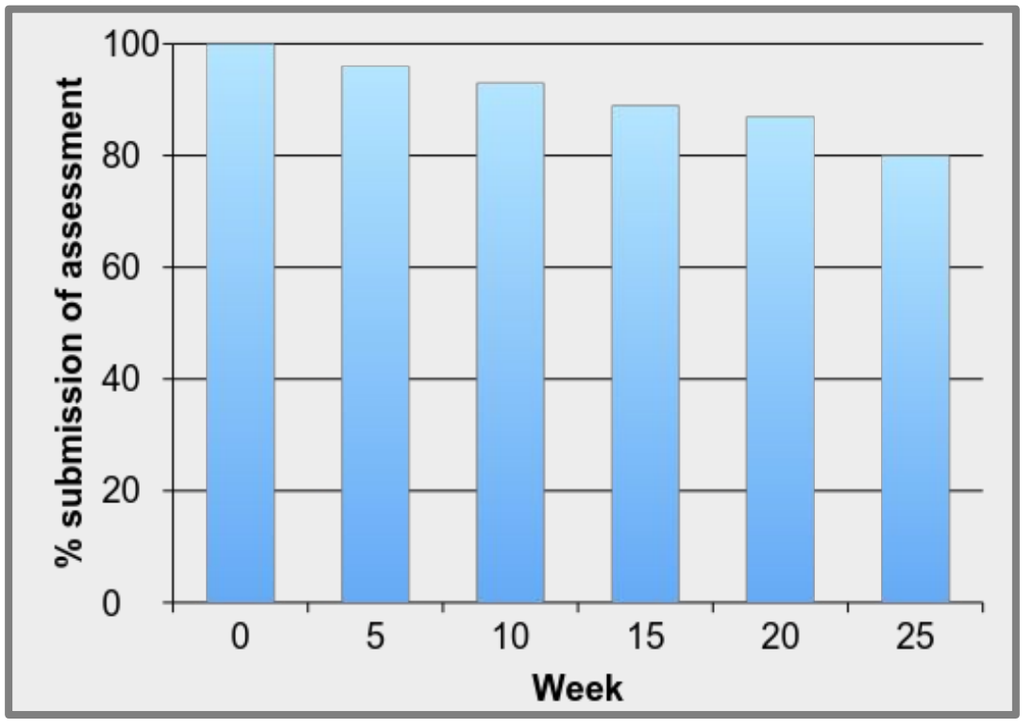
- Functionality of the HTML editor
- ~~Duplication of units, subsections, sections~~
- Single folder for files and uploads
- Discussions – different useage

Some facts: how big?

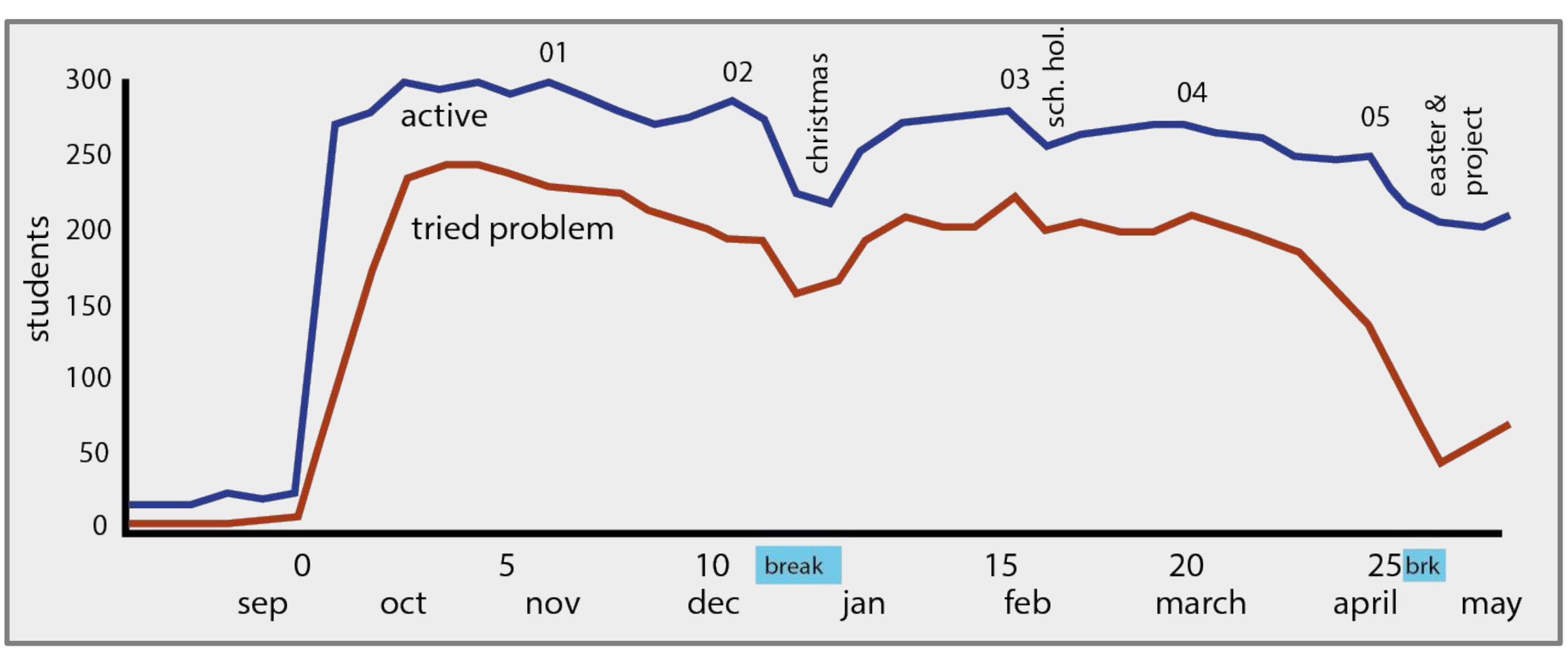
- Over 250 web pages
- 1400 files & uploads
- Over 6000 hours of authoring



Some facts: retention & engagement



- 80% submitted the 7 month assessment
- Engagement constant
- Over 640 entries to the collaborative glossary



Student feedback

‘...an excellent learning platform and have studied at a faster rate than what was recommended’

‘so much better than just reading the books’

‘I have to say how much I'm enjoying myself! It's like a good book that I can't put down……... it really doesn't feel like studying’

‘I have learnt more on this course than any before. It’s great that everything is completely up to date with new updates happening all of the time.’

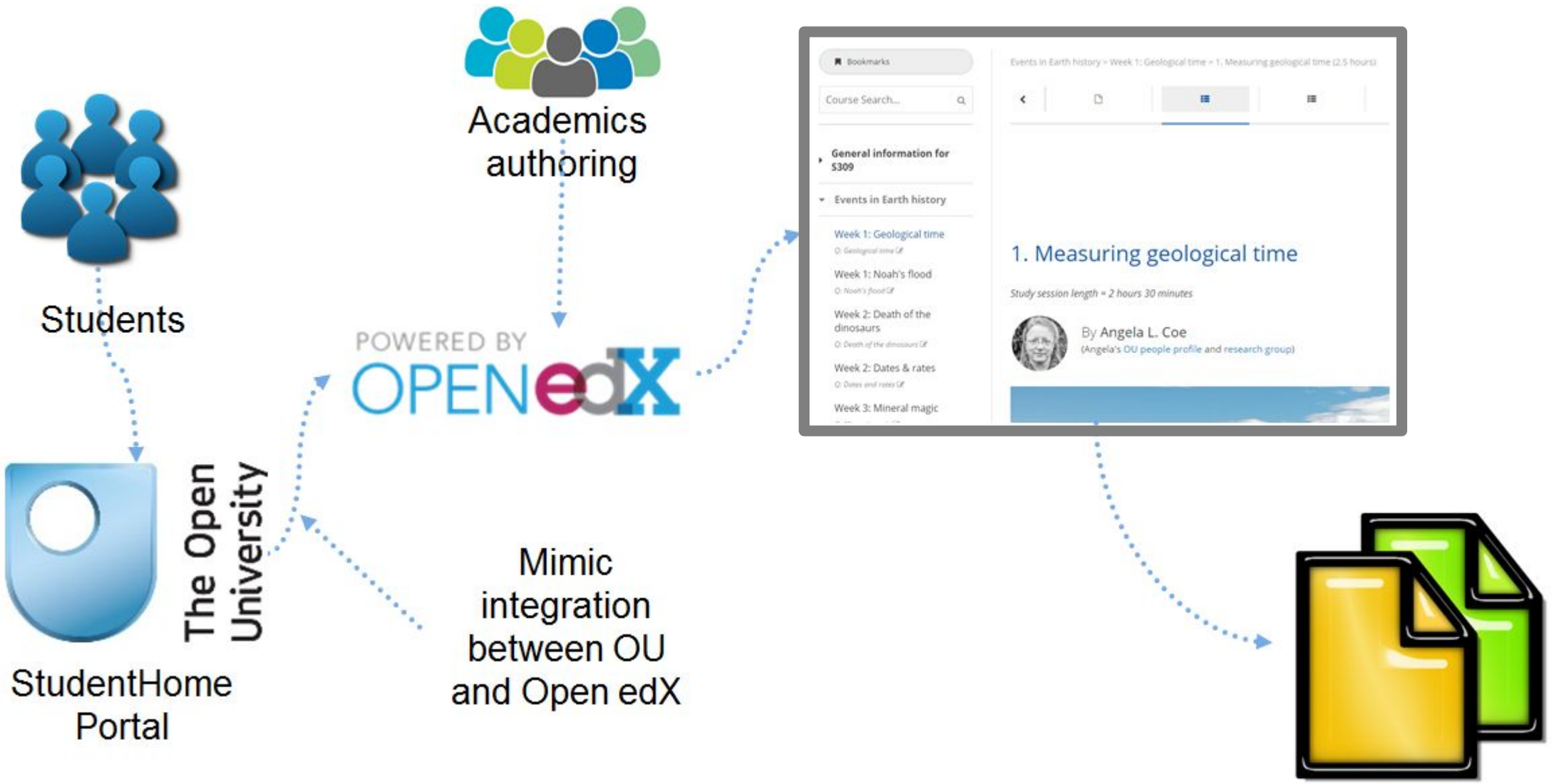
‘I would like to study another subject through the Open edX platform.’

Twitter: @S309geology
Angela.Coe@open.ac.uk

Chantine: system integation and user management

System integration and user management

Deliver a seamless student study experience through our StudentHome portal into Open edX, and a learner experience that is geared towards online only study but with the ability to produce offline formats for accessibility needs.



Systems integration and user management

What we did

Roles:

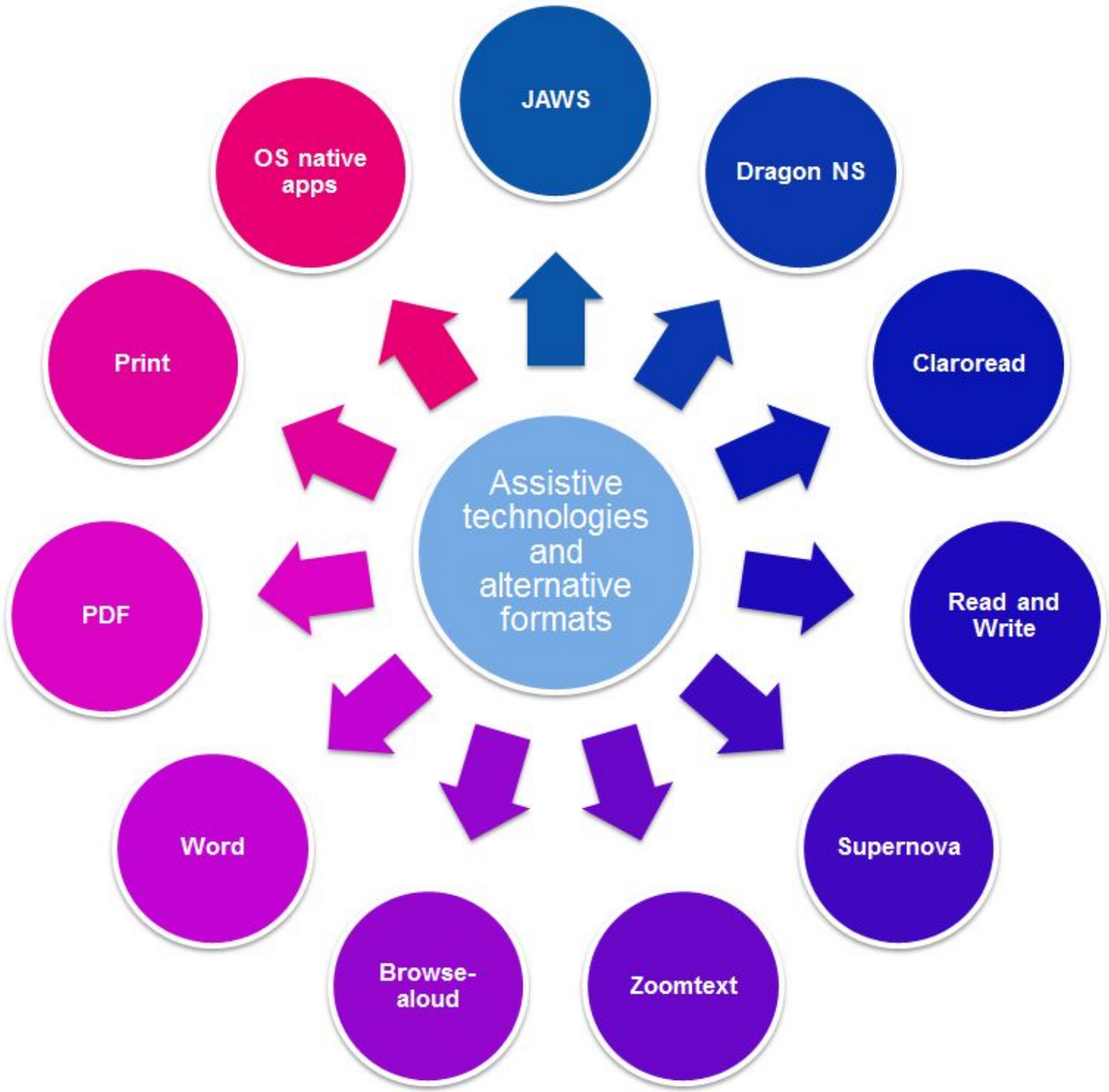
- Sys Admins = OU Admins (2 people)
- Course admin = IT Administrators (1 person per course)
- Course staff = Authors and Discussion Admins (as many as needed)
- Tutors/instructors = Beta tester and Discussion Moderators (as many as needed)
- Developmental testers and external assessors = Beta tester (as many as needed)
- Student = Read only roles such as potential business partners and helpdesks (as many as needed)

The challenges we faced:

- Removing website access without going through your provider
- Providing read only access to potential business partners and customers
- Batch uploading users to the website
- Making minor theme updates and updates to support pages
- Restricting access to flat pages to enrolled users by role or content group. (licencing issues)

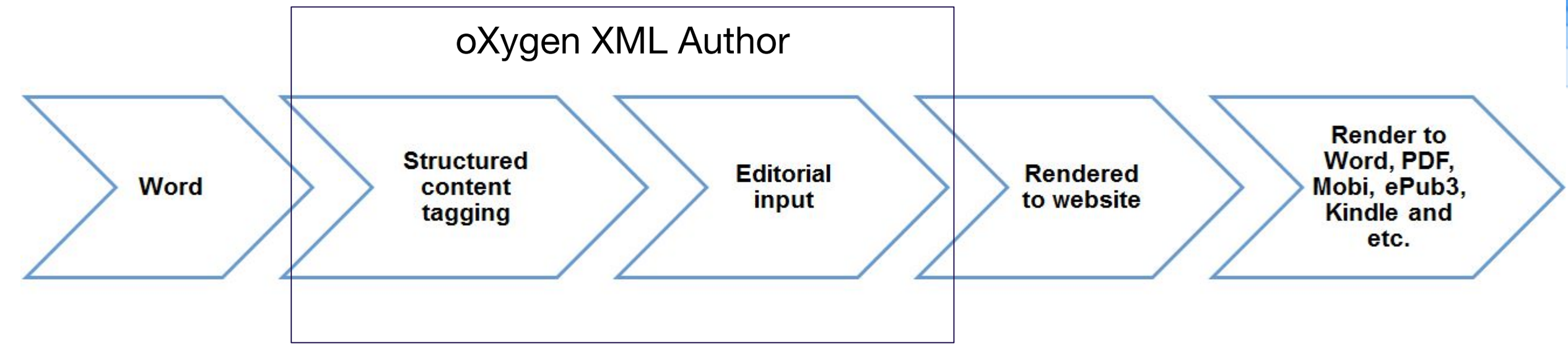
System integration and user management

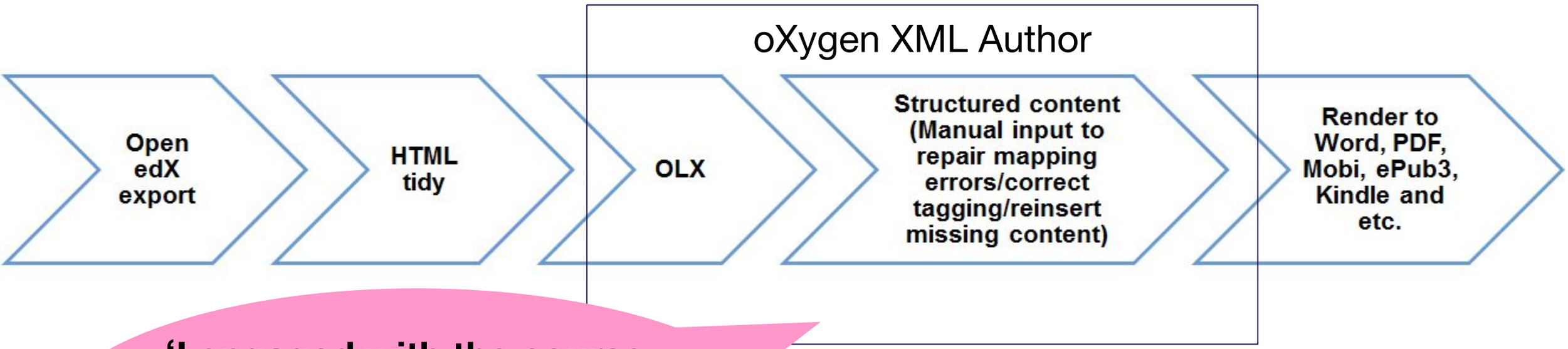
What tools do our students use?



System integration and user management

Accessible formats production





‘I engaged with the course so much more. ….. the best and only course I have not been glad to see the end of’

Matthew: Working with Authors

One size doesn't fit all

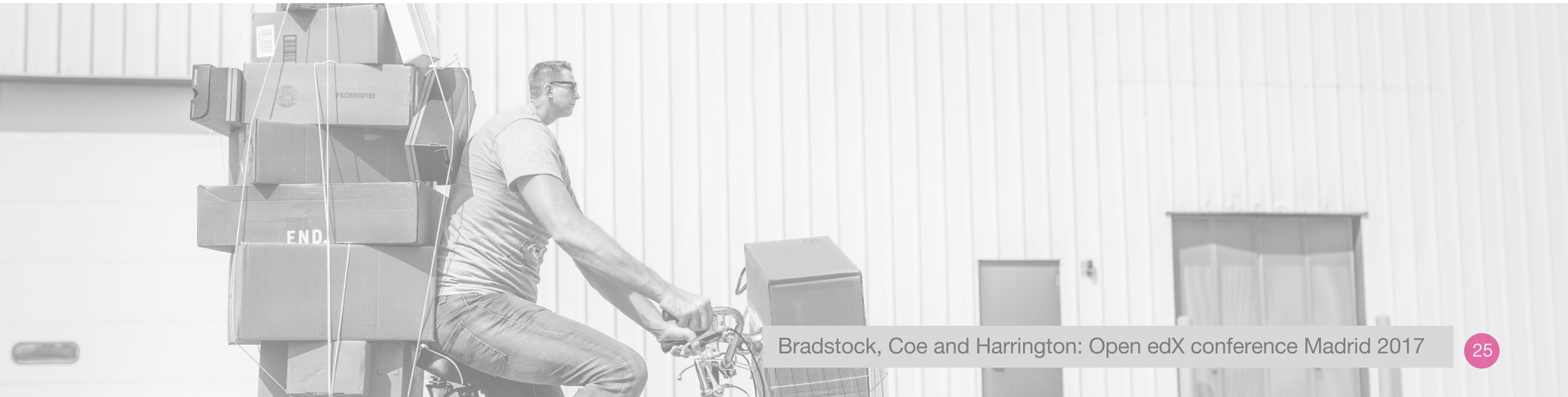
Us: "What do you want to do for yourselves?"

S309: "Everything."

Us: *[Internal Screaming]* "Oh, ok."

S309: "Ok, maybe not everything."

Us: "Please don't scare us like that."



But what about...

HTML

Layout

Audio

Illustration

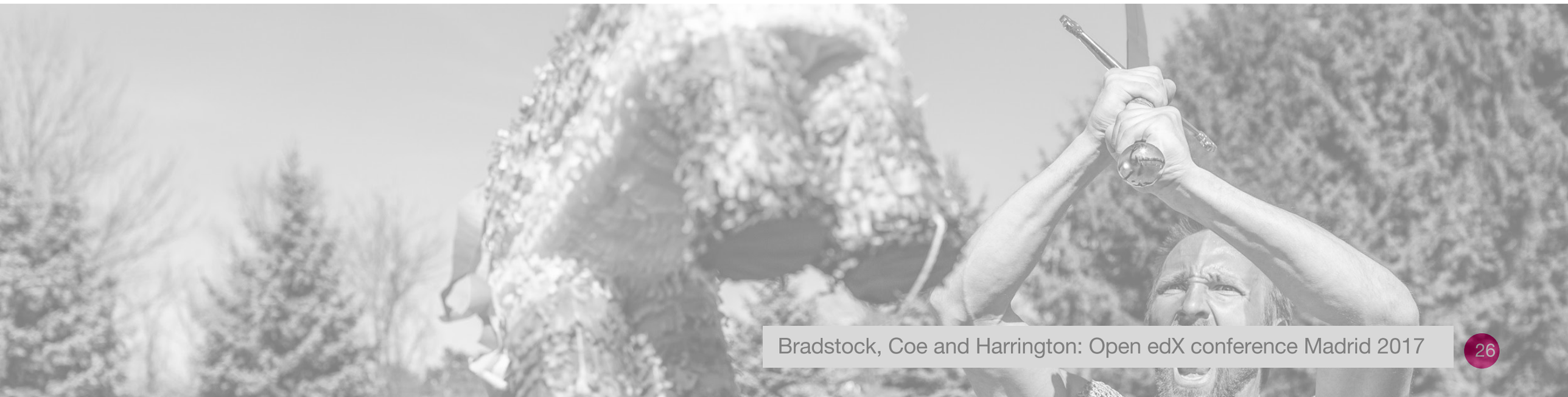
Video

Image processing

Styling

Editing

...



Happy author, happy student

Fun and pride comes from demonstrating mastery.

An author who feels proud of their work, and has had fun authoring, creates better content.

Better content makes students happy and learn more.

Bradstock, Coe and Harrington: Open edX conference Madrid 2017

So please:

Build tools anyone can use, not just specialists

Apply the same rigorous quality controls to those tools that we apply to things that are student-facing

Remember accessibility

Some key points

Academics using Studio for effective collaborative authoring

OLX is extremely inconsistent

Non-technical integration with complex systems

Scaling: equivalent 30 MOOCs worth of content in one course

Discussion:
1 Lurker tracking
2 Personalisation
3 Topic subscription

Thank you!

(Did we leave enough time for questions?)