

Open edX Out of Context

.....
The Open University Approach

.....
Life-changing Learning
.....

Who are we?

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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



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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)

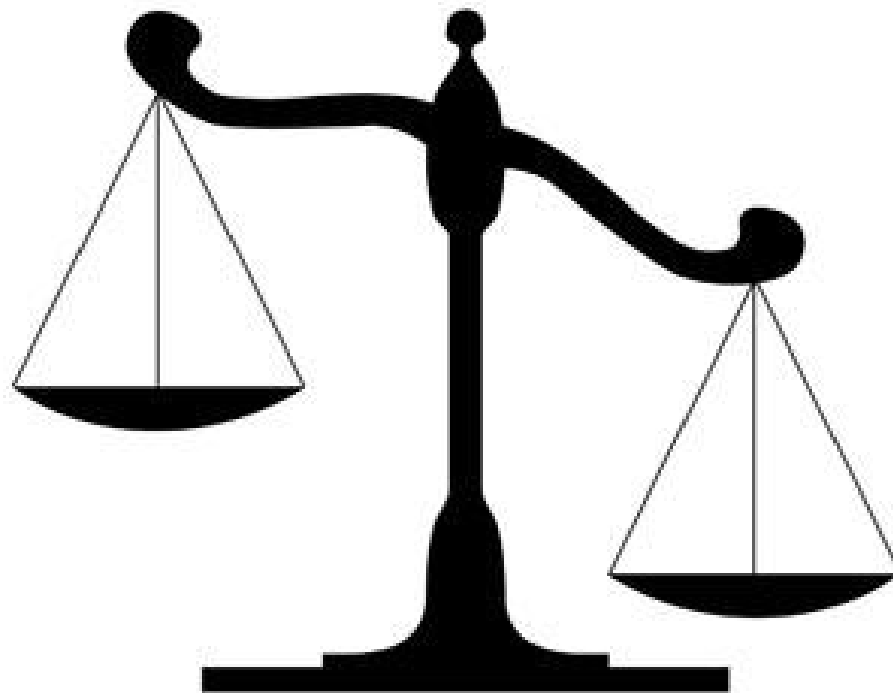
Twitter: @S309geology



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)



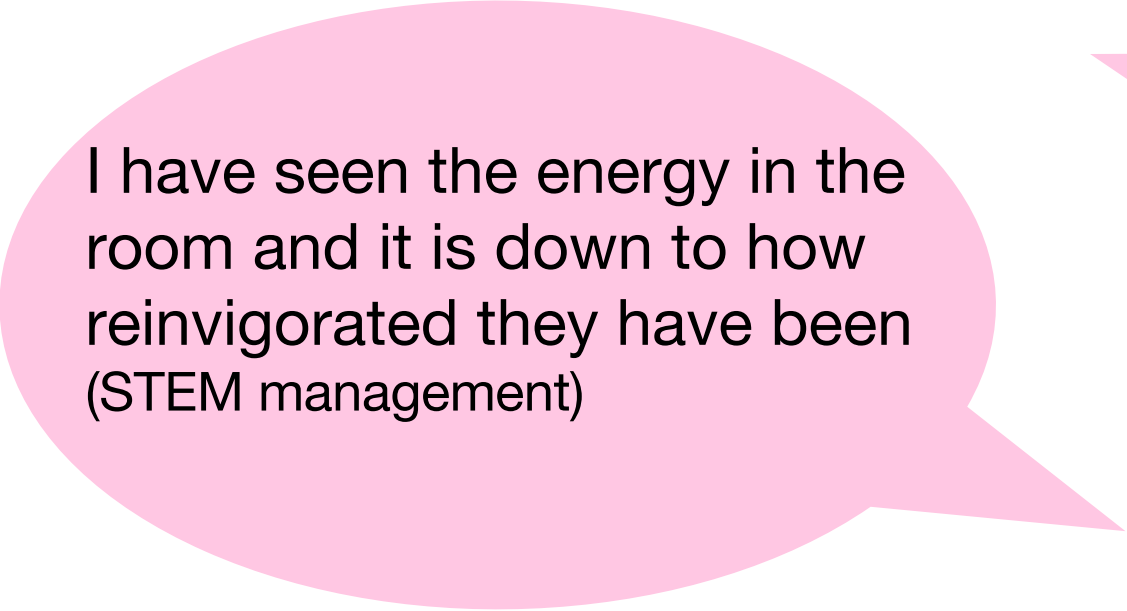
Some of the S309 team

Some facts: staff feedback

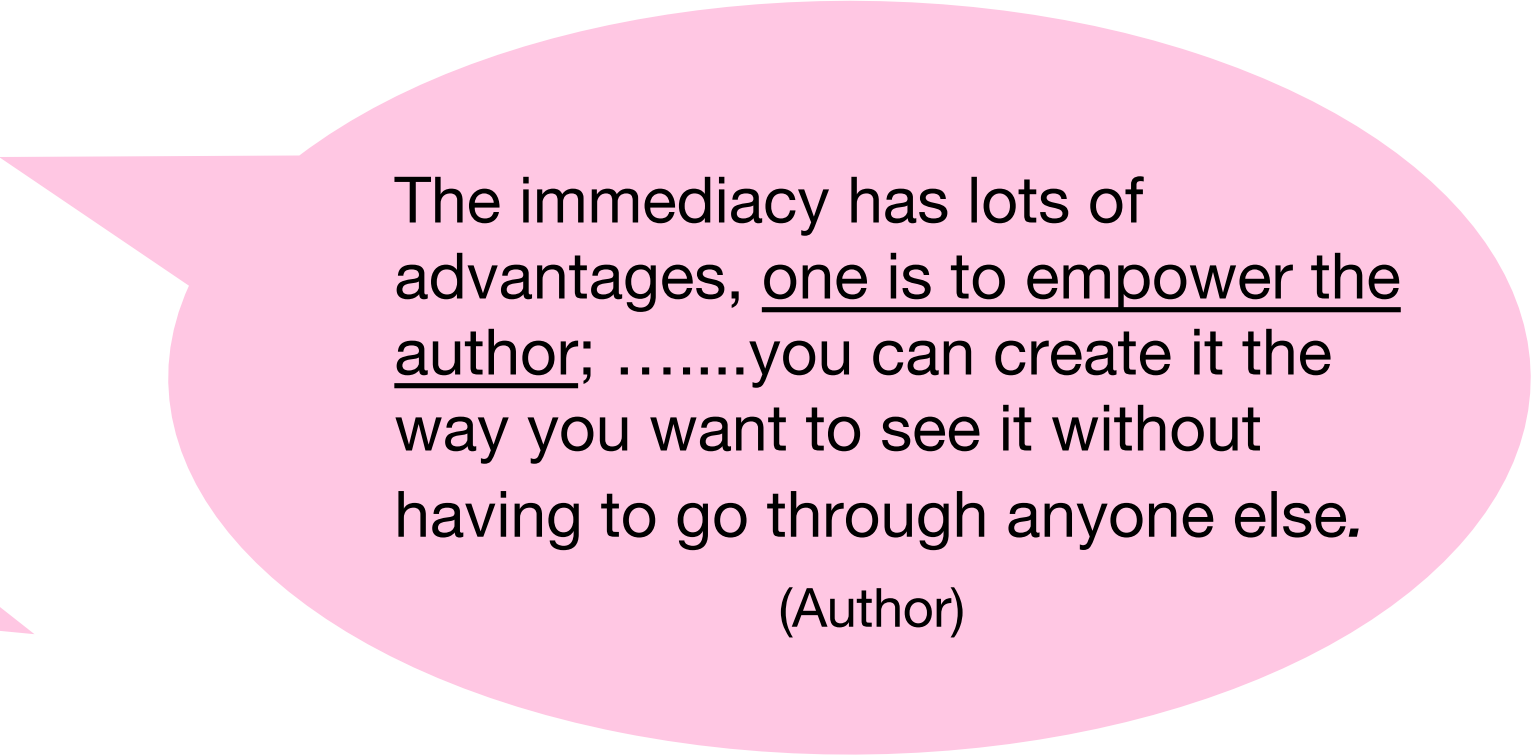
- Empowered
- Can release creative powers
- Asked to join the team



**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, one is to empower the author;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:

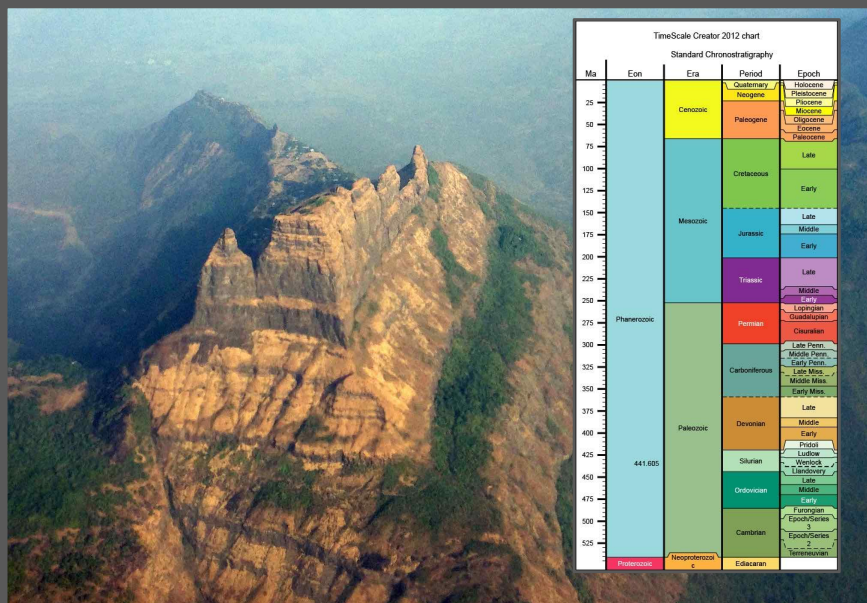
- 1. author tools**
- 2. right environment**
- 3. flexible platform**

- **Proactive management of people and workflow**

- **Access to html, the ‘toybox’, and flexible structure**

- play learn
- study sessions

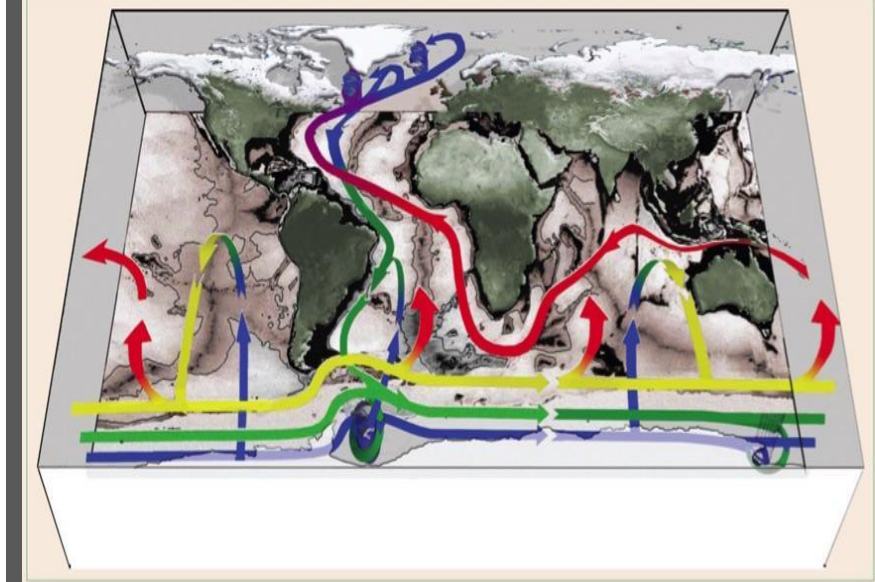
S309 structure



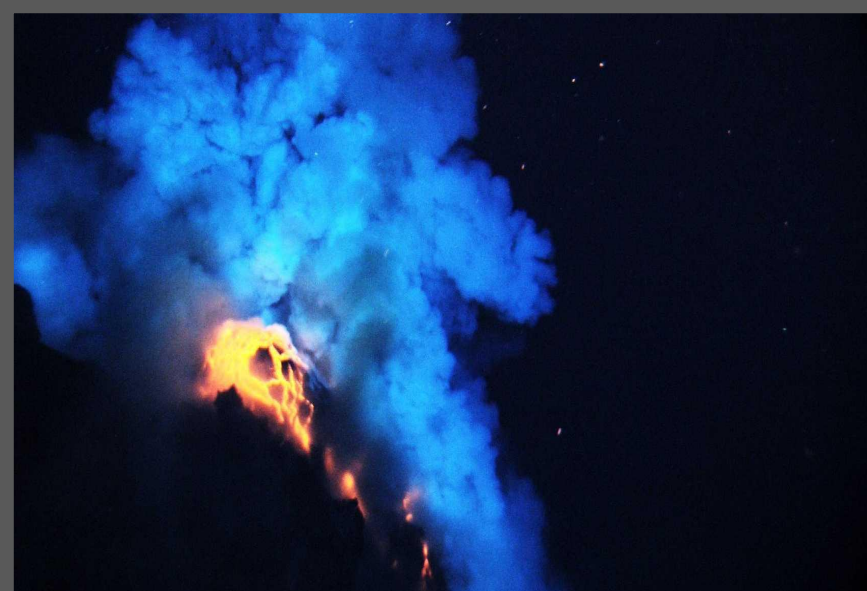
Events in Earth history
Weeks 1-5, assessment 1



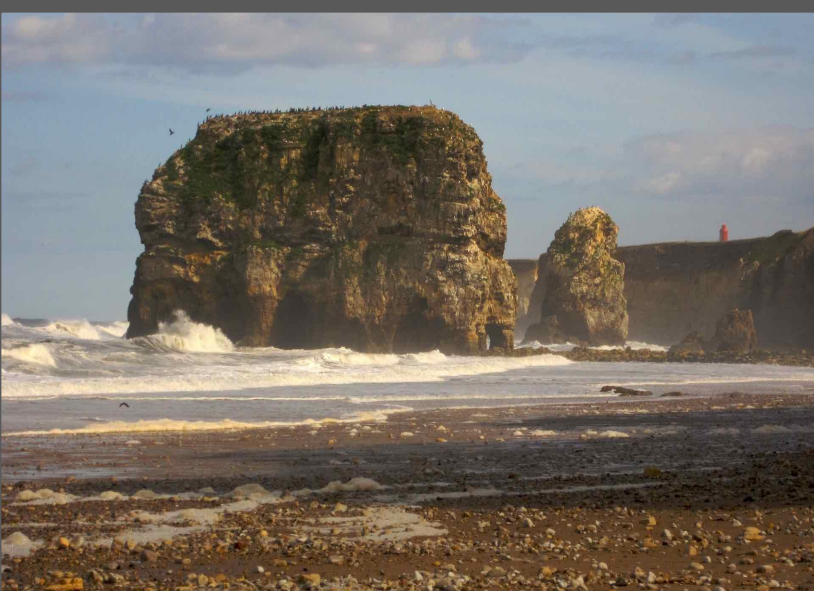
Mountains
Weeks 6-10, assessment 2



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



Mountains
Weeks 6-10, TMA02

section

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

[Home](#) **Course** [Discussion](#) [Progress](#) [Calendar](#) [Online tutorials](#) [Bookshelf](#) [Glossary](#) [Notes](#)

Bookmarks

Course Search...

General information for S309

Events in Earth history

Mountains

Oceans

Volcanoes & remote observation

Week 16: Volcanism & Earth
[Q: Volcanism and Earth](#)

Week 17: Arc magmas: origins & evolution
[Q: Arc magmas](#)

Week 18: Mantle plumes
[Q: Mantle plumes](#)

Week 19: Hot LIPs in space
[Q: Hot LIPS in space](#)

Week 20: Volcano monitoring
[Q: Volcano monitoring](#)

Week 20: TMA04

Sediments and sea-level

Earth science in society

End of module assessment (EMA)


Volcanoes & remote observation > Week 20: Volcano monitoring > 1. Volcanic hazards (2 hours)

< | | | | | | | >

Bookmark

1. Volcanic hazards

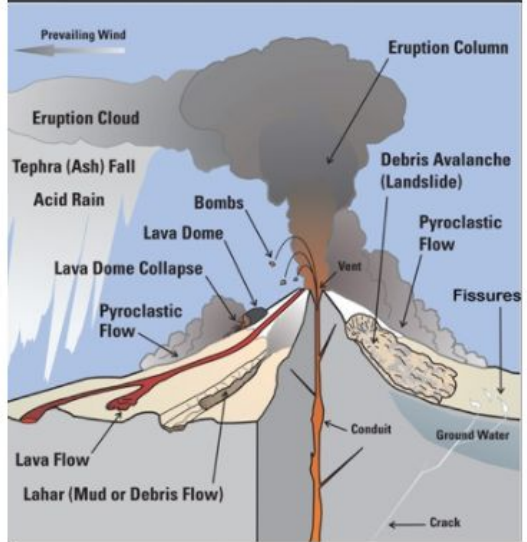
Study session length = 2 hours



Tom Argles
[\(Tom's OU people profile\)](#)

The term 'volcanic hazard' tends to conjure up dramatic images of the immediate threats from volcanic eruptions — phenomena similar to those that Pliny the Younger reported in AD79. Modern reports of volcanic hazards also generally focus on the local, catastrophic effects of eruptions, some of which are depicted in the figure to the right. However, coverage of the Eyjafjallajökull eruption in Iceland, for instance, rapidly focused on the more far-reaching hazard of volcanic ash on air travel across northern Europe.

Many of the hazards in the figure are directly related to the violent eruption of hot material (magma, ash, bombs etc.) at the surface. Others are caused by the instability of the dynamic volcanic edifice (such as debris avalanches or dome collapse flows), or by atmospheric phenomena (e.g. lahars triggered by rain storms). The intense storms above erupting volcanoes commonly generate spectacular displays of lightning, a hazard that you might not immediately associate with volcanoes. However, human observers standing on an exposed slope of volcanic ash (a particularly poor conductor) are potentially at high risk from volcanic lightning strikes. In fact, the terrifying lava flows of disaster movies rarely feature in real volcanic catastrophes: they seldom travel faster than running pace because most lavas are too viscous to flow quickly. When basaltic lava is contained within a channel or tube, it can flow more quickly. In an exceptional event in 1977, around 70 people died when a lava lake at Nyiragongo in central Africa drained in under an hour via a flow moving at speeds of up to 17

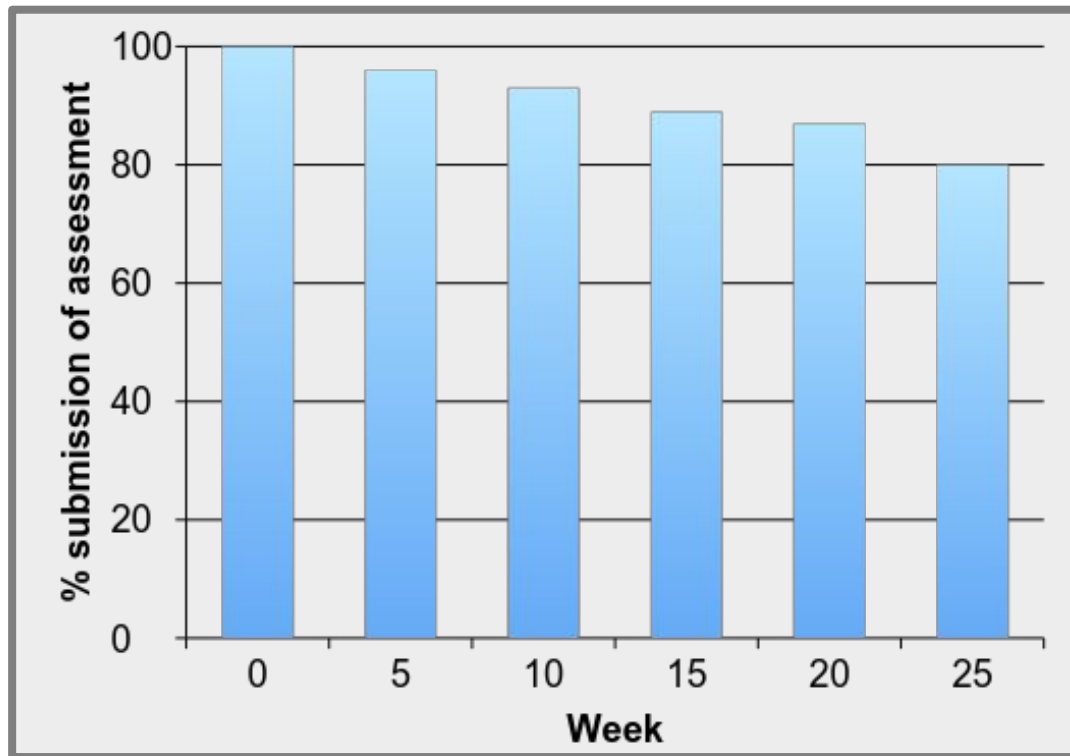


Geological hazards near a volcano.

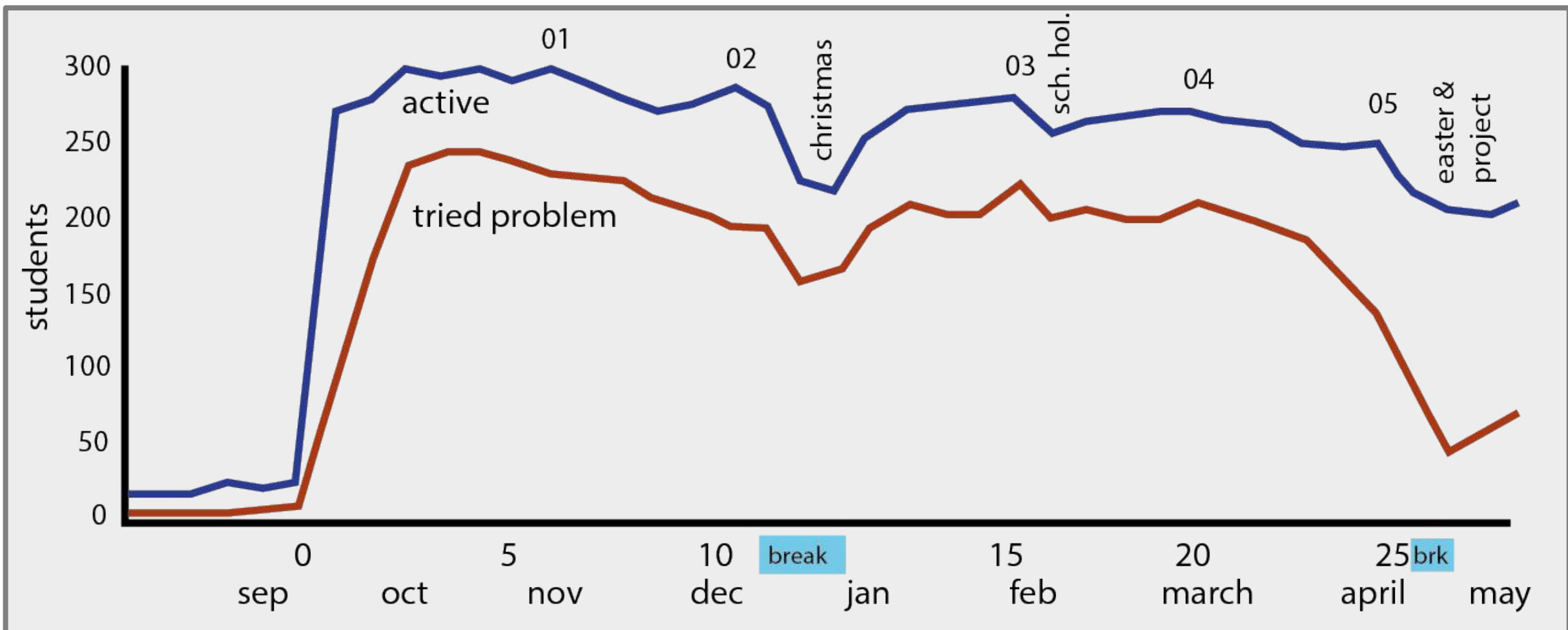
Image: courtesy of US Geological Survey

Show long description

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
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Chantime: system integration 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:

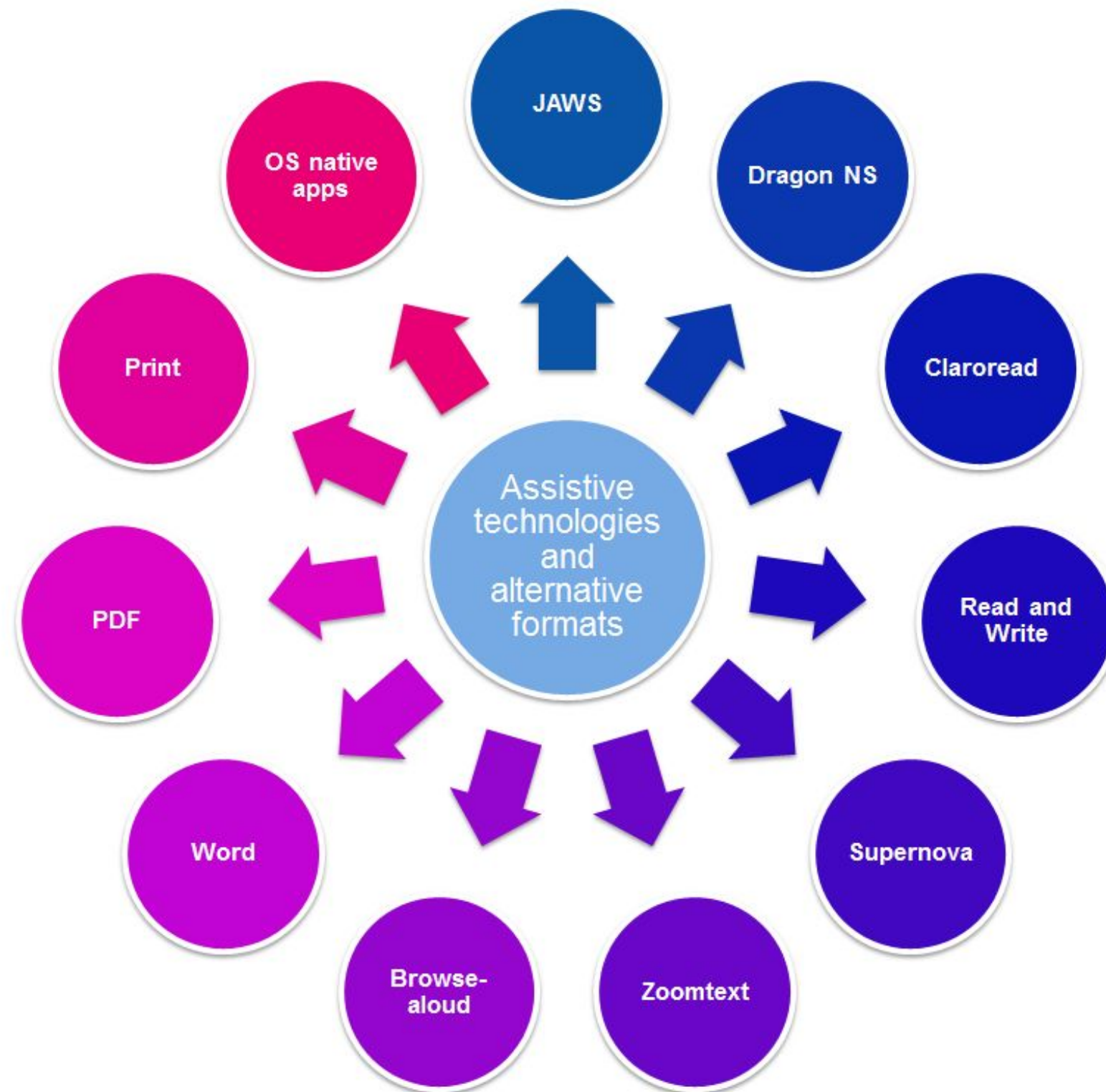
- Sys Admins = OU Admins (2 people)
- Course admin = IT Administrators (1 person per course)
- Course staff = Authors and Discussion Admins (as many as needed)
- Tutors/instructors = Beta tester and Discussion Moderators (as many as needed)
- Developmental testers and external assessors = Beta tester (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)

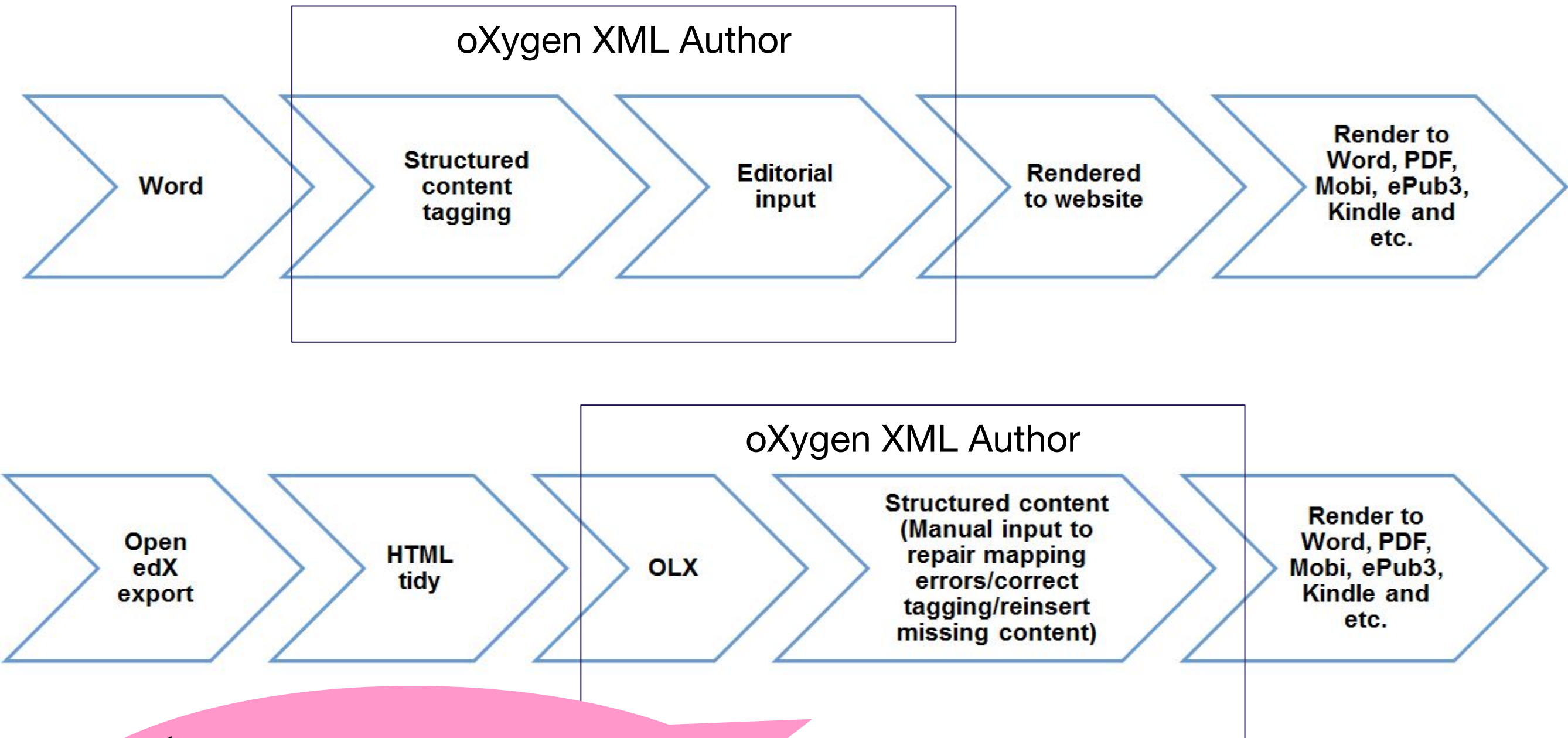
System integration and user management

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

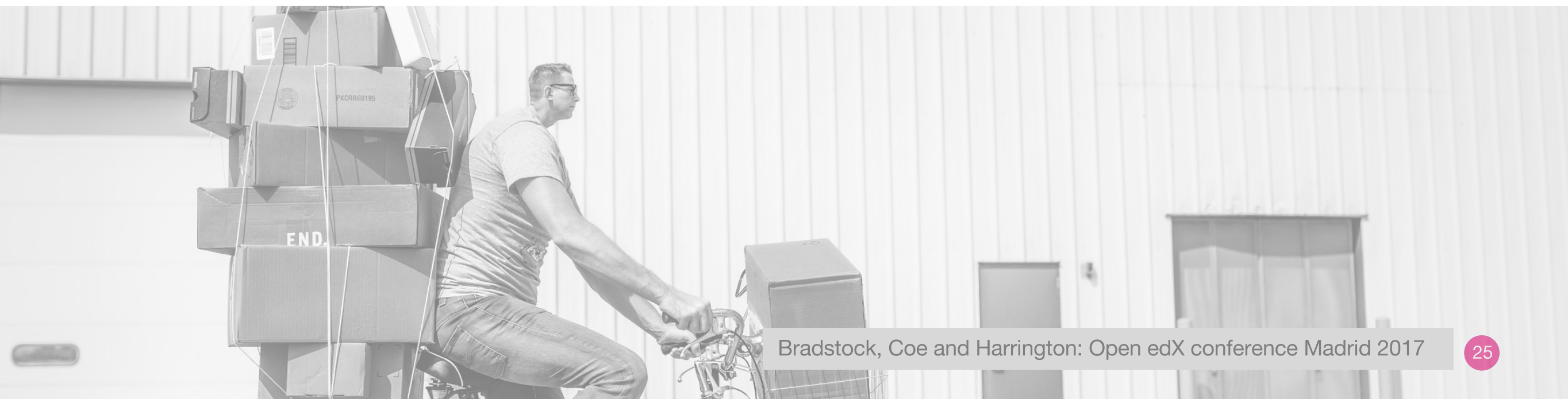
Us: “What do you want to do for yourselves?”

S309: “Everything.”

Us: *[Internal Screaming]* “Oh, ok.”

S309: “Ok, maybe not everything.”

Us: “Please don't scare us like that.”



But what about...

HTML

Illustration

Image
processing

Layout

Video

Styling

Editing

Audio

...

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.



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





**Academics
using Studio for
effective
collaborative
authoring**

**OLX is
extremely
inconsistent**

**Non-technical
integration
with complex
systems**

Some key points

**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?)

