Never Mind the Browser - Feel the Width

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Abstract
In print design, desktop software has allowed designers to control the form of final publication. Type, content, imaging and pre-press are all part of one design process. By taking ownership of the entire medium of networked multimedia; from content to delivery, a designer can look developing in three broad areas. 1/ the backend server process; 2/ content organisation and interface design 3/ delivery in a browser. This panel presentation uses an example project - just completed - to highlight the need of a specific browser to deliver controlled content within an educational environment.

Designing to the medium
Our brief was to create a content generator (for staff) and delivery system (for students) that tracked student progress through a work experience module at Wolverhampton University, England. The content had to be editable (by staff); it had work from a central server to remote clients (within the University’s student facilities); and it had to able to be installed on student local drives (at home and at their place of work). The software’s design and functionality had to provide students with a consistent interface to the University and its corporate identity.

We based the system around a locally held database, as we could not guarantee access to the internet while on work placements, but we still built the students’ interface using HTML protocol. So we created our own browser based on Microsoft’s internet explorer. We then created a rich text to html converter to allow easy document creation for the editing of content (for staff) and entry of information (for students). Because of the browser integration, the completed project is now able to sit easily off-line or on-line, integrating activities into a unified environment on and off campus.