



Deme: Now a ModularCMS, Now in Django

► Todd Davies - overview, history/motivations

Mike Mintz - code, demo

(see <http://deme.stanford.edu>)



What is Deme?

- Content management *framework*
 - “an API for creating a customized content management system” - Wikipedia
 - language-dependent (Django/Python)
 - other examples: Drupal, Joomla, Plone, Zena
- Built to support group collaboration
- Designed to be flexible and extensible

A brief history of Deme

Begun in 2003 out of PIECE: partnership with East Palo Alto Community Network (<http://piece.stanford.edu>), student programmers

“demes”: geographically-based communities (originally, districts of ancient athens)

Target: enhancing legitimacy/effectiveness of community groups in east palo alto which rely on f2f meetings

2003-2004: PHP, focused on multi-functionality, using frameset, and post/send email integration

2005-2006: AJAXified interface, reimplementation in Rails

2007-2008: Generalized to CMS, first in Rails, then in Django

Online deliberation is happening on
a large scale for...

Very small groups (~3-4 people)

Somewhat larger groups when like-minded

Technically proficient groups (e.g. open
source development)

Professional/workplace teams

Consider these groups...

Volunteer advisory boards

Neighborhood associations

Consortia of nonprofits

Grassroots activist groups

Labor union chapters and caucuses

Clubs and religious congregations

University-based groups

Ad-hoc citizen groups (e.g. for community planning)

Groups do things like...

Get to know each other and share information

Define their mission and goals

Make and observe rules (e.g. bylaws)

Plan joint activities

Make budgets and spend money

Issue joint statements (e.g. press releases, flyers)

Form committees and work with other groups

Keep and retrieve records of all these things

So what's the problem?

In fast-paced regions (e.g. the bay area), people are having a harder and harder time getting together to do these things

Much group communication must be asynchronous (people participate at different times, different places)

Existing and widely available async tools (email, message boards, blogs, wikis) are not well suited to group *action*

So... group activity either doesn't happen (“bowling alone”) or is managed by paid professionals/the few who have time

And so we have...

“Inner circles” and managers rather than group democracy – professionalization of advocacy and service

Fewer opportunities to meaningfully take part in groups and movements

People sticking to their narrow social circles

Elections that are determined by TV ads and expensive, influence techniques (e.g. “perception management”)

Citizens who don't vote/don't take voting seriously

Politicians who are accountable to lobbyists more than to constituents

What is needed?

An asynchronous (available at different times, different places) tool for *online group deliberation*

And it should be...

- freely available
- nonproprietary (controlled by the group)
- *comprehensive*
- easy to use*
- widely compatible with hosting environments
- trustworthy (secure, transparent)

Features widely available elsewhere...

Group spaces with defined membership and guest access options (Yahoo Groups etc.)

User accounts and multiple groups available

Threaded discussion viewer with optional email-backing

Collaborative editing of documents

Sharing/storage of files and links

Less common features needed for group work

Discussion centered on agenda *items*

Split-screen display for cross-view
referencing (covisibility of item and
comment)

Flexible polls and decisions

Threaded in-text comments in documents

Discussion-integrated project planning
tool

Multiple meeting areas per group space

Embedded website viewing

Group homepage (2003)

Demo Group

Logged in as **todd**
[logout](#) | [my groups](#)

Demo Group

DEME version is 0.5.0

This is the description of the group, which can be edited by anyone with access to the group. In this case, you are in the Demo Group, which is meant as an interactive introduction to Deme and its features.
[\[Edit this summary\]](#)

Welcome, **todd** [:::my settings](#) [:::logout](#) [:::my groups](#)

Meeting Areas

- [Learn Deme Here](#)
- [Sandbox](#)
- [Deme Discussion](#)
- [mymeetingname](#)
- [RM Players](#)
- [testi testi](#)
- [Discussion](#)
- [Members assembly](#)
- [Eureka!](#)
- [Puppu](#)
- [The Cybernetics of on-line deliberation](#)

[Create new meeting area...](#)

Announcements

- Jan-14: test
- Dec-29: Test2
- Nov-29: This is a short announcement.
- Sep-17: Test
- Mar-15: Welcome to the Demo Group! Click the "Learn Deme Here" meeting area link on the left to get an introduction to meeting area features.

[View all announcements](#)
[Add new announcement](#)

General Options

- [My profile](#)
- [Member List](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Links](#)
- [Library](#)
- [FAQ \(Frequently Asked Questions\)](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Chat](#)
- [Leave this group](#)

This site uses [DEME](#) software.

Done

Meeting area (2003)

Meeting Area

Groupspace: [My Groups](#) > [Demo Group](#) > [Learn Deme Here](#) Logged in as **todd**
[Turn help off](#) | [logout](#) | [my groups](#)

This item: **3. Example: Document**

[-< To item index](#)

3. Example: Document [Document]

Preface:
This is an example of a document, and you are reading the "preface" of the document. Read the document below for more information about documents, and, if you like, you can post a comment on this document.
Document posted by: [andrew](#), Feb 02, 17:21

General comments on this document:
[New document announcement](#)
[Example of a general comment on a document](#)

A document can be anything that contains text you want people to read. It is possible to post and view documents other than plain text ones (e.g. pictures, Word documents, video clips), but currently only plain text documents support in-text commenting (explanation of in-text commenting will follow shortly). But there are many possible documents that can be posted in a meeting area even now. A document could be the proposed bylaws of your group, a press release you are drafting together, an interesting article you want everyone to read, or something else, as long as it is in text form.

Deme was designed to support document collaboration, document-centered discussion, and decision making about [Example of an in-text comment - andrew](#) documents. "Document collaboration" means that two or more people work together to draft and/or revise a document. In the action menu (the pulldown menu filled in light blue) you can always select "New document" to post a document from scratch. When you are currently viewing a document in the folio viewer's item display, the action menu will also contain an option for

Global comment | Sort comments by: [item](#) [subject](#) [date](#) [author](#)

- [3. Example: Document](#) [Example of an in-text comment - andrew - Feb 02, 17:26](#)
- [3. Example: Document](#) [Example comment - todd - Feb 22, 16:59](#)
- [3. Example: Document](#) [No comments on comments? - guest - Jun 14, 17:00](#)
- [4. Example: Decision](#) [New Poll: "Example: Decision" - andrew - Feb 02, 14:05](#)
- [3.1. Example: Document](#) [New Document: "Example: Document" - andrew - Feb 02, 17:41](#)
- [5. Example: Link](#) [Link: "Example: Link" - andrew - Feb 02, 17:38](#)
- [6. Example: Project](#) [Project: "Example: Project" - andrew - Feb 02, 17:41](#)
- [6.a. Task: "Example: Task" - andrew - Feb 02, 17:48](#)
- [6.b. Task: "Example: Task Handler" - andrew - Feb 02, 17:52](#)

3. Example: Document [andrew](#) [prev](#) [next](#)

Message #: 7

Comment: [Example of an in-text comment - andrew - Feb 02, 17:26](#)

I am inserting this comment into the text of "Example: Document", in between the words "about" and "documents." I don't have anything particularly to say about these words, or the surrounding context, other than to show that an "in-text" comment like this can be placed anywhere in the text of a document. This is done via the "Comment on item" feature selected from the action menu when a document is loaded into the folio viewer.

Notice that, when you click on the item reference for this comment (the underlined first part of its header), the folio

Done

Decisions (2003)

Meeting Area

http://www.groupspace.org/deme/groups/Demo-Group/marea/?marea_id=1

Groupspace: [My Groups](#) > [Demo Group](#) > [Learn Deme Here](#) Logged in as **todd**
[Turn help off](#) | [logout](#) | [my groups](#)

This item: **4. Example: Decision** | Sort comments by: [item](#) [subject](#) [date](#) [author](#)

[<- To item index](#) | [--- select an action ---](#)

Example: Decision [Decision]

Question: Let's try to make a decision. The decision concerns whether the text of 'Example: Document' is sufficient as an overview of how documents function in a meeting area. Click 'Vote now' to make your choice known, and note that you can annotate your vote with a comment. I have selected 'consensus' as the decision rule, meaning that everyone has to agree for this proposal to pass.

Decision called for by: **andrew**, Feb 02, 17:31
Announcement Message

Voting has closed. [Closing message](#)

Choices	Total votes
Approve "Example: Document"	1
Don't Approve "Example: Document"	1

Member choices/comments:

andrew *Approve "Example: Document"*
 Feb-02, 17:32
I agree with the current state of "Example: Document"

guest *Don't Approve "Example: Document"*
 Jul-05, 07:05
Just to see what happens.

Did not vote:
 todd, brendan, kbhatt, mchadec, salt, mian...

4. Example: Decision **andrew** [prev](#) [next](#) Message #: 8

Comment: **New Poll: "Example: Decision"** - Feb 02, 17:31

[Respond to this comment](#)

Let's try to make a decision. The decision concerns whether the text of 'Example: Document' is sufficient as an overview of how documents function in a meeting area. Click 'Vote now' to make your choice known, and note that you can annotate your vote with a comment. I have selected 'consensus' as the decision rule, meaning that everyone has to agree for this proposal to pass.

Done

Redesign (2005)

about:blank - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address about:blank

Go Links

Meeting Area

General Dev and Design

General@Development.Groupspace.org

Logged in as aaron tam
my groups | logout

Item View Combined View Discussion View

Goto Actions

New Comment Find Collapsed

Groupspace.org
My Groups
Development
General Dev and Design

Group Options

- My Settings
- Member List
- Calendar
- Links
- FAQ
- Library
- Bulk Subscribe
- Email Options
- Meeting Areas
- Homepage

<< hide options

19. Goals [Document]

Preface:
Here's the list from my whiteboard last night - feel free to comment/revise/add more. I've added a few things.
Document posted by: todd, Oct 01, 15:16

General comments on this document:
[View document attachments](#)

Some Deme Project Goals for 2004-2005 (not complete)

- Email integration (posting) - Brendan and Andrew
- Bug/tweak list (Item 4, Deme 0.3) - Alex and Andrew
- New stuff for users - Todd, plus others as needed for coding
- Documentation website
- Friendliness - new tooltips, labels
- Aesthetics
- Outreach to developers, funders, users, stakeholders - Todd = Deme development workshop
- New funding proposal for Haas
- Grant proposal for outside funding
- Academic outreach - Todd = Conference in March/April
- Revise white paper, publish
- Other design goals
- Novice infrequent user vs Experienced frequent user modes
- Reformat indexes, display by relevance
- Better cross-referencing interface and appropriate same-window placement
- Sectioning items/discussion
- Better organization and editability of item index
- Wiki-like editing/comments keyed to versions in header
- Better priv/customizability [look/feel options](#) [todd](#)
- Code cleaning/reviving
- [Virus checking?](#) [todd](#)
- [Implement poll/survey](#) [todd](#) [Member participation statistics](#) [todd](#) [Presence detection](#) [todd](#)

Link to this item

debugging...
See raw docref'd text
See orig text

Top

Comments | Expand all | Collapse all

- New Document: "Goals" - todd - Oct 01, 15:16
- Virus checking? - todd - Oct 11, 16:02
- Presence detection - todd - Oct 11, 16:04

Comment: **Presence detection** - Oct 11, 16:04

Would be very useful at some point, especially if profiles had links to IM addresses.

Respond to this comment

Link to this message

- Member participation statistics - todd - Oct 11, 16:07
- Implement poll/survey - todd - Oct 11, 16:41
- look/feel options - todd - Oct 12, 21:06

New Comment

Meeting Area Members

Online (3)

- aaron tam
- newmanb
- todd

Chat

aaron tam joins the chat.

aaron tam says to all: hi!

todd says to all: hi hows it going?

newmanb says to all: pretty good.

Start Chatting

hide chat >>

Groupspace.org

deme v0.6

Done

Internet

start

about:blank - Micro...

2:43 PM

Group homepage (2005)

about:blank - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help Address about:blank Go Links

Group Homepage

Development

Development.Groups.org

Logged in as **aarontam**
my groups | logout

Groupspace.org
My Groups
Development

Group Options

- My Settings
- Member List
- Calendar
- Links
- FAQ
- Library
- Bulk Subscribe
- Email Options
- Meeting Areas
- Homepage

<< hide options

Meeting Areas

Create new meeting area

group image file here

- General**
(15 posts since 09/25) | Info ⓘ
This is the general development area. Feel free to post any questions or comments you may have. Also, feel free to posit suggestions and advice for the layout.
[Edit this description]
- New Meeting Area**
(7 posts in last 2 hours) | Info ⓘ
- Testing New Name**
(9 posts in last 3 days) | Info ⓘ
- New Marea**
(2 posts in last 23 min) | Info ⓘ

[more]

Announcements

[Add Announcement]

[06/24/05 12:05PM] by **aarontam**
Action: [Edit] [Delete]
This is a test announcement. There will be many more announcements in the future.

[more]

Group Members

Online (3)

- aarontam ▲
- newmanb
- todd ▼

Chat

aarontam joins the chat.

aarontam says to all: hi!

todd says to all: hi hows it going?

newmanb says to all: pretty good.

[Start Chatting](#)

hide chat >>

Groupspace.org

deme v0.6

Done Internet

start about:blank - Microso...

2:43 PM

Features in AJAX version (2006, last PHP version)

Visual guidance: affordances, icons, and labels

Tabbed switching between item, discussion, and combined views

Internal view histories (HTML caching)

XMLHttpRequest loading of comments and items

Dynamic string filtering for searching items and comments

Wiki-like editing of documents, with version memory* for comments

Live JavaScript chatting

Problems of incremental development (2003-2006)

- Desired incremental addition of features and redesign of the system, but PHP didn't encourage agile programming. Lots of code duplication, then complete rewrites
- New interface developments were difficult to incorporate in legacy code - no clear back-front end separation
- People wanted to use the latest and greatest tools - Gmail, Wikipedia, Facebook, Google Calendar, Wordpress, but these could not be integrated into a traditional CMS
- Existing CMSes were getting more flexible, but legacy codebases and large developer communities were hard to plug into

From groupware to a CMS

- Existing CMSes and group sites tend to be one-size-fits-all
- Websites come in many shapes and sizes - should be able to use what they need and discard the rest
 - e.g. “meeting area” design could be used for commenting a blog; a group calendar could be a stand-alone website
- So we tried to strip down the idea to its essence: every user-visible object is an *item* that can be commented upon

Deme as a CMS

- Hierarchy of item types: person and group are agents; agent is an item; HTML-document is a document, document is an item
 - can be refined to further subtypes
- Permissions are very granular - each field of each item can specify permissions for default, group, and user
- View code is separated - can use different viewers and can embed viewers
- Everything is commentable - comments can be *located* and viewed in context
- Every item has full version history - comments apply to range of versions
- Other aims: support data sharing (e.g. OpenID,RSS), email integration, cross-server integration; WYSIWYG editing



Deme: Now a Modular CMS, Now in Django

Todd Davies - overview, history/motivations

▶ Mike Mintz - code, demo



deme



Deme: thanks and contact info

The Deme team (2003-):

Alex Cochran, Todd Davies, Jonathan Effrat, Mike Mintz, Mic Mylin, Ben Newman, Brendan O'Connor, Andrew Parker, Leo Perry, Aaron Tam

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Contact us if you want to get involved:

davies at csli dot stanford dot edu; mikemintz at cs dot stanford dot edu

project homepage: <http://deme.stanford.edu>

