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Creating Online Learning Communities During the Pandemic

Definition: What are learning communities

A learning community is a group of people who share common academic goals and attitudes and meet semi-regularly to collaborate on classwork.

Community psychologists such as McMillan and Chavis (1986) state that there are four key factors that define a sense of community: membership, influence, fulfillment of individuals needs and shared events and emotional connections.

So, the participants of the learning community must feel some sense of loyalty and belonging to the group that drive their desire to keep working and helping others. In addition, the things that the participants do must affect what happens in the community; that means, an active and not just a reactive performance.

Motivation: Engagement and Network Effects

Learning communities can be created to attract and retain learners. They provide an interactive way to meet, stay in touch with and contextualize communications on per-platform, per-course and per-topic bases.

Typical use cases include live office hours with participants, text-based discussions, public and private backchannels and video conferencing.

In short, they maximize engagement and create network effects– in this instance, an additional learner in the course adds on the value of the course itself to others,

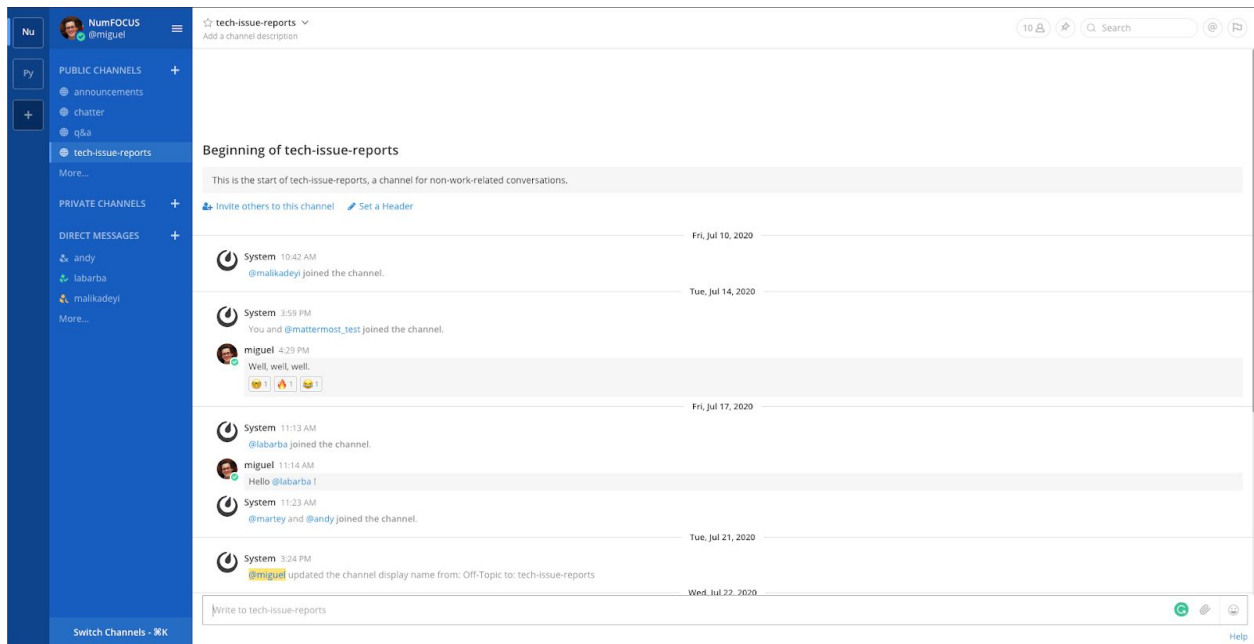
Architectural Overview

IBL's Open edX-based learning ecosystem integrates with open source technology via single sign-on and REST API connections in order to automatically enroll learners in private channels and groups.

Additionally, popular video conferencing solutions such as Zoom and Cisco Webex.

Social Platform (Open Source)

Workspaces



IBL’s approach consists of providing an entire workspace (or focused set of channels) per course, per platform or per segment of students.

The goal is to be able to create focused communities that optimize for moderators’ and learners’ experiences at scale.

Consequently, the IBL learning platform becomes both a software product and a social network. The software product determined who would join the network, but the network is what keeps users there.

It’s like a multiplayer video game, or Harvard: Sure, the quests and campus are useful, but people keep showing up because of the friends they’ve made or the connections they intend to make.

The users are bound to the courses because of the communities created within them. This network effect inevitably makes for learning platforms without this capability inferior engaging-wise.

We will show the example of [JupyterCon](#)—a vibrant community of Jupyter notebook practitioners.

Public and Private Channels

New Channel
✕

Type

Public - Anyone can join this channel.
 Private - Only invited members can join this channel.

Name

URL: / (Edit)

Purpose (optional)

Describe how this channel should be used.

Header (optional)

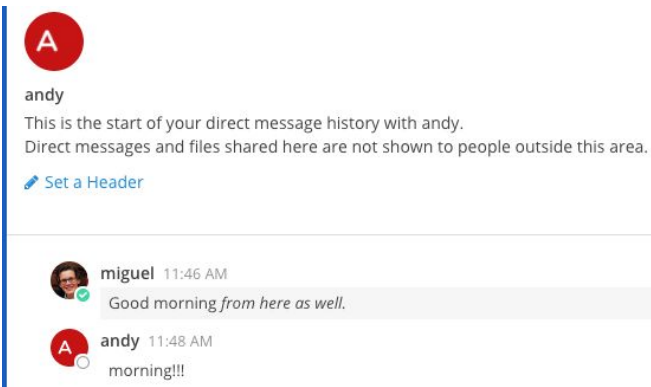
Set text that will appear in the header of the channel beside the channel name. For example, include frequently used links by typing [Link Title] (http://example.com).

[Cancel](#)
[Create Channel](#)

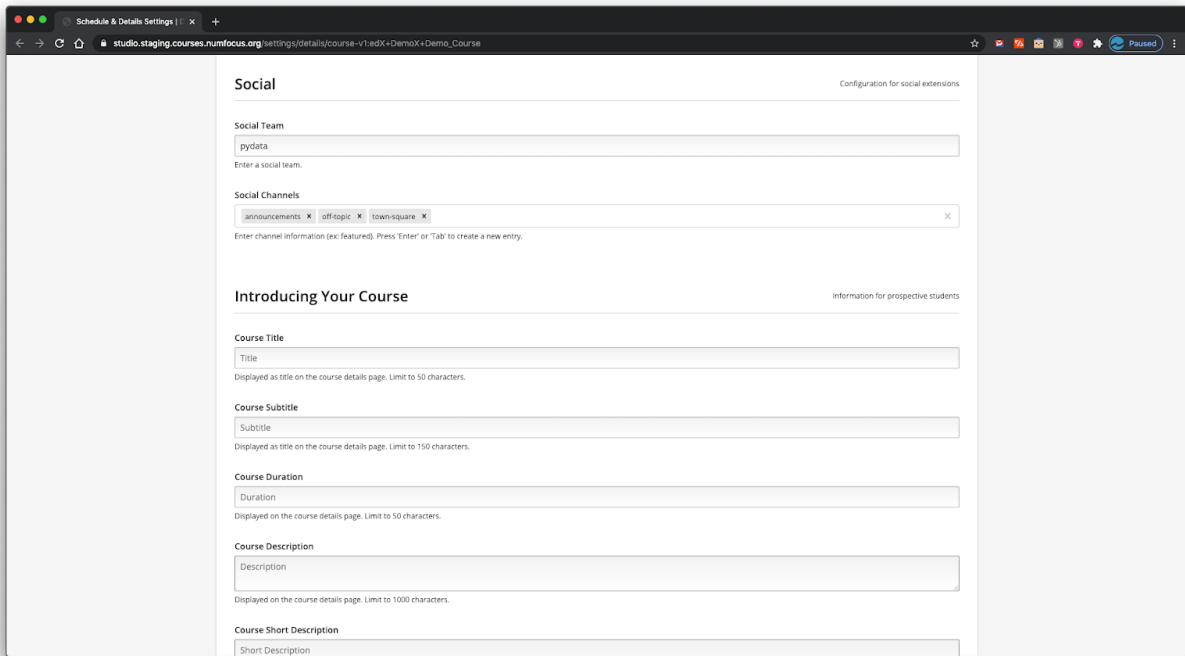
Within each workspace (recall that it is possible to have one workspace per course), instructors are able to create public and private channels for segmented conversations.

For instance, a course's workspace may feature the following channels: announcements, chatter, q&a and tech-issue-reports.

Direct Messages



The ability to directly message other learners, instructors and moderators is also included. This is essential to maximize network effects within the platform by developing participants' bonds with one another for learning and career advancement purposes.



Video Conferencing

Webex and Zoom

Online Event

[Bookmark this page](#)

Meeting Details

Meeting No	1299029925
Title	Intro to Python
Start	Fri Jul 31 2020 19:02:00 (Central European Summer Time)
End	Fri Jul 31 2020 20:02:00 (Central European Summer Time)
Timezone	Europe/Madrid
Duration	60 minutes
Password	numfocus

0 DAYS 0 HOURS 0 MINUTES 0 SECONDS

Details

Hosted By:
staff

Note: Countdown time is shown based on your local timezone. Meeting links will show 15 minutes before the meeting time.

Join Meeting

Video conferencing is also supported via Webex and Zoom for virtual learning, office hours, live study group sessions and other forms of synchronous learning.

Generally, these communities meet once a week for 60-90 minutes for lively discussions and activities centered around that week's course material.