

PROJECT FOR PACKAGING AND CHANGE TO FREE SOFTWARE OF INSTITUTIONAL APPLICATIONS CURRENTLY INCORPORATED IN UFRGS'S INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Since the modernization of UFRGS's information systems, whose design started in July 1995, the University's Data Processing Center has been working in integrating its systems through a corporate data model. The University's database was gradually constructed based on a corporate conceptual model. Today, it is the integration link between the many information systems available to the University's community. Students, professors and administrative technicians have access to several processes being controlled by the applications that use the institutional database as their source of data. Since most of the University's processes require some interaction between them (academic and administrative processes combining personal data with institutional data), the database integration solution, adopted since 1996, turned out to be very effective and with excellent practical results. Each new application constructed under the corporate model was easily incorporated to the environment, since all previously implemented resources were readily available for it. They were, however, definitely attached to a database being maintained by many modules of different applications, each one with responsibility for the maintenance of the data under its competence.

With the presentation of some papers on the I Information Technology Workshop of the IFES (Superior Education Federal Institutes) held in Salvador in 2007 and its following editions, illustrating applications developed in CPD-UFRGS, many education institutes showed interest for solutions displayed by CPD's technical team. Because of the applications' high level of coupling to the institutional database, it became unfeasible to release any displayed solution in that moment. Those requests were formally sent by other universities since 2008 and could only be fulfilled if the choice of packaging some specific modules of UFRGS's information systems and turning them to free software, thus allowing their deployment in other education institutes, could be taken.

This choice would demand effort to remove the applications' ties to the institutional database, making them self-sufficient in its execution context and convert the applications to execute with all the resources (OS, DMBS) of a free software environment. With the goal of packaging some Web applications and changing them to free software for use of other institutes, this project was started.

To the present day, we have defined a methodology to detach the application from UFRGS's integrated database to make it execute as an independent, self-sufficient and easily configurable package, deployable in another institute. We also started the packaging process, having the Electronic Elections System fully concluded, the Workstation Registry System in final stages of development, and the Photographic Collection Application, Questionnaire Builder and Generic Event Portal foreseen for 2012.

The project allowed its involved technicians to acquire necessary experience for changing the institutional systems into free software products, and its collaborative character, involving several Federal Education Institutes of Brazil, has placed CPD-UFRGS in participation of this new technologic paradigm motivated by the free software community. With applications being packaged, we hope to contribute to the dissemination and qualification of information in bodies of different public spheres that use the Public Software Portal as a channel of discussion and solutions in IT.