

EGRET Vignettes

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A series of vignettes outlining various uses of talks.cam.

Jane, Reader in Astrophysics:

Jane has to organise research group seminars and publicise them. She also suggests useful seminars to her grad students, and looks for talks she wishes to attend herself. This used to entail a lot of work for Jane. She had to send a list of her group's seminars to the webmaster each term, and then go and bug her webmaster to make any subsequent changes. She also had to send mails to mailing lists with the same information. She'd have to remember to keep an eye out for posters for upcoming talks on the Faculty notice boards. She was on a couple of mailing lists for other seminar groups to find yet more talks so she had to wade through quite a lot of often irrelevant email. Finally, she'd have to mail her grad students with seminar suggestions, and remember to update her own calendar with talks she wanted to attend.

Now Jane uses talks.cam all the time. She enters her group's seminars into talks.cam as she arranges them (no rush to sort them all out early to get them up on the website), and mails the URL to her seminar members mailing list. She's really happy that it all goes onto the departmental website too, without having to bug her webmaster every week with updates and changes. (It also includes related talks in other disciplines, as the talks displayed on the website aren't just the ones Jane organises; she's also included a list of talks organised by the Department of Applied Maths and Theoretical Physics.) She also uses talks.cam to get a feed for all the talks she's interested in, right into her Google calendar. She used to have to keep an eye out for new posters appearing on Faculty notice boards; now talks.cam delivers the information automatically.

Talks.cam makes propagating this information very easy; Jane can share lists of interesting talks with her students, and create her own lists for her research group seminars. She can also use the talks.cam iCal feed to her calendar. By integrating lists from other departments into her own list, Jane can create a meta-list of relevant talks.

Hilary, Earth Sciences Faculty Webmaster:

Hilary finds that one more routine, but often urgent, task has been automated by talks.cam. She's had to put seminar listings up on the departmental website. Hilary often had to do last-minute changes to the website when a seminar venue was changed or a speaker cancelled. Now there's a feed from talks.cam which Hilary's put into the website, and she can basically just forget about it, as the website's automatically provided with up-to-date information from talks.cam. (Talks.cam provides the code for a webmaster to embed in the page source.)

Bob, History Faculty Administrator:

Bob used to have to spend a lot of time devising posters and emails to remind people about upcoming seminars in his faculty. He still does posters for the really important events, but for all

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the rest, he uses talks.cam to get the information out there quickly and easily. He can even choose how his list of talks is displayed. If he wants to include talks.cam listings in his Faculty newsletter, talks.cam comes in a printable format. Again, he's no need to hunt down the webmaster every time a seminar moves room; he just puts the info to talks.cam, and it's done! He also used to worry about how he would reach all interested parties: had he picked the right departments to send posters to? Had he sent his email to the right mailing lists to get to people who might be interested, but without spamming people who might not be? Now, he knows that interested people can browse talks.cam, and they can opt to receive reminder emails; he knows he's not spamming anyone!
(Talks.cam effectively provides a website for each list, with a range of different display styles.)

Ping, the Conference Organiser:

Ping didn't have to create a whole new website for his conference. He could enter all the individual sessions into talks.cam, and it displayed them in a special style designed for one-day conferences like his. Each speaker could add their abstract to talks.cam, and these were easily available for each conference delegate. Previously, he'd have had to set up a whole website, and badger the speakers for abstracts etc. Also, talks.cam publicises his conference to a wider audience, without him having to make any extra effort!

(Talks.cam provides a unique URL for each list, and as previously mentioned, it provides a range of display options.)

Susan, the new grad student:

Susan has just come to Cambridge. She found it really easy to get up to speed. Her supervisor sent her a link to the talks.cam listing for the seminar groups in her faculty, and she's used talks.cam to get connected to people in other areas, searching for related lists, or interesting one-off talks. She felt that getting connected to the Cambridge seminar scene might be difficult, but talks.cam made it really easy for her. It provides all the information: who the talk's for, where it is, when it is and who's speaking, and delivers all this to her Google calendar.

Lucy, Cambridge resident:

Lucy works in R&D for a biochemistry firm. She really appreciates being able to find and go to relevant talks, and she loves that she can get email reminders. She's now acquired a network of academic contacts which are proving really useful in her work. Talks.cam has also allowed her to expand outside her work-related interests, as she's started going to History of Science talks as well, which she found through talks.cam's 'other talks' feature (this displays a randomly-generated set of talks in a sidebar on the page). Without talks.cam, she'd never have known any of these events were taking place.

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