The trials and tribulations (and benefits!) of open sourcing a homegrown solution.

Open Sourcing Harvard University's Collaborative Annotation Tool

The story begins with Harvard University's Collaborative Annotation Tool, proprietary software that allows faculty and students to annotate a variety of media, including text, images, audio, and video.

We decided to adopt best practices for our internal software development, including an Agile methodology.

We also had to re-engineer our software architecture to decouple it from Harvard's environment (left panels) and make it open to other environments (right panels).

Overcoming these challenges has provided us with a rich set of rewards:

- We have and will continue to refactor our internal development processes;
- We have and will continue to abstract our software architecture to make it compatible with a wide variety of platforms;
- We are working on creating a model for distributing our software inside and outside of Harvard University;
- We are currently applying this model to another application, the Course iSites Quiz Tool, and hope to apply this model to other applications we develop in the future.

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We value your feedback. Please visit us at:
http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/acts/catool/

We are currently working on a model for licensing and distributing our code, and determining how to build a community.