



SESSION

“Fleet Systems”

LOCATION

Room Two

HOSTED BY

[OF] du Lac (Obsidian Fleet)

TIME

7pm GMT

(all times presented in CST [UTC-6])

[OF] du Lac, 1:01:07 PM

== ^ == ^ == ^ == EVENT: FLEET SYSTEMS == ^ == ^ == ^ ==

phew ...

barely time to breathe lol

alrighty

[TF] Kaede Kayano, 1:01:50 PM

cheerleads for @[OF] du Lac

[OF] du Lac, 1:02:20 PM

so for those who don't know me I'm @[OF] du Lac , co-founder of Obsidian Fleet, simcest facilitator and also one of the original people behind IFS1, and SMS (now Nova)

I'm also the creator of IFS2, Obsidian Fleet's new Fleet Management System

and I'm here to talk about Fleet Systems

it's a boring topic really, so get a coffee and pull up a pew 😊

first of all, who uses IFS v1?

Marty, 1:03:24 PM

will it be released, IFS2?

Mecha meme, 1:03:46 PM

What are those?

[OF] du Lac, 1:04:01 PM

@Marty not at the moment

I'll get into why's and stuff in a bit

@Mecha meme IFS is Integrated Fleet System, it's a way to manage the entire website

[NDF] Cael Maz, 1:04:59 PM

Oh I would love to have something like that. Best I have is MediaWiki and that's it 😞

[TF] Kaede Kayano, 1:05:13 PM

TF are still using IFS 1

[STF] JoeP, 1:05:33 PM

“manage the entire website”

[OF] du Lac, 1:05:49 PM

so for example, IFS1 can be seen at <https://thetafleet.net>, <https://pegasusfleet.net>

[STF] JoeP, 1:05:54 PM

How “entire?”

[OF] du Lac, 1:06:01 PM

everything but forums

application forms, ship db, sim management, open positions, reports, etc.

Marty, 1:06:28 PM

sim listing, senior staff listing

[OF] du Lac, 1:06:31 PM

IC/OOC news

it's basically a CMS with Fleet Management on it

[STF] JoeP, 1:07:09 PM

Ahh, gotcha. But forums are a separate component?

[NDF] Cael Maz, 1:07:14 PM

drools a bit

[OF] du Lac, 1:07:23 PM

yeah, I could never get them working well integrated

[TF] Kaede Kayano, 1:07:30 PM

However, IFS 1 doesn't work very well anymore. But we can't find anything better to replace it. The PHP coding is too far out of date for half of its functions to work on newer browsers.

[OF] du Lac, 1:07:46 PM

herein lies the issue with it

I wrote that with Frank Anon when I was 19

or 20

I'm 39 now

[OF] Sepandiyar, 1:08:51 PM

old man

[OF] du Lac, 1:08:55 PM

quick brb, just burned my tongue on my dinner

Captain Graecen 16th Fleet, 1:09:01 PM

So, I don't use either IFS 1 or Nova but we are looking at trying to create something new.

[OF] Talla H'Rhar, 1:09:04 PM

ifs2 looks beautiful.

Captain Graecen 16th Fleet, 1:09:39 PM

is there an example of that?

[OF] du Lac, 1:09:51 PM

<https://www.obsidianfleet.net>

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 1:10:05 PM

IFS2 is Obsidian Fleet.

[TF] Kaede Kayano, 1:10:21 PM

It does look a lot better, but I don't think OF has made it available to everyone yet.

[OF] du Lac, 1:10:24 PM

much like BFMS is BravoFleet

[OF] Sepandiyar, 1:10:54 PM

its no @[TF] Kaede Kayano

not*

Captain Graecen 16th Fleet, 1:11:22 PM

When do you think it would be?

[OF] du Lac, 1:11:40 PM

not for a while at this point, i'll get into why in a bit

so yes, sites have had to evolve because times have changed. Nowadays we're moving more towards mobile technology, and the old solutions don't work

[BF] BlackWolf, 1:12:14 PM

btw example of the BFMS: <https://www.bravofleet.com/>

[OF] du Lac, 1:12:50 PM

interestingly both myself and @[BF] JonM came up with a very similar solution but using different bits to achieve it

[OF] Sepandiyar, 1:12:57 PM

great minds

[OF] du Lac, 1:13:38 PM

before I go further, someone just DM'ed me with a question - aside from IFS1, what do other people use?

[STF] JoeP, 1:14:52 PM

Are you asking us?

[OF] du Lac, 1:14:58 PM

yes

[OF] Kate, 1:15:22 PM

MediaWiki, or any kind of wiki software.

Captain Graecen 16th Fleet, 1:15:26 PM

I have used JCink, Yahoo, Groups.io, individual websites

[TF] Kathryn Burke, 1:15:27 PM

We're looking at using a web design program.

[NDF] Cael Maz, 1:15:36 PM

Just MediaWiki anymore but I am one of 3 users that use it 😞

Mecha meme, 1:15:44 PM

Dokuwiki for our wiki

[STF] JoeP, 1:15:50 PM

We rolled our own solutions a number of times after migrating off of Prodigy sometime in the 90's

[OF] Kate, 1:15:58 PM

Some just use a normal website. But those are small and don't require fleet management jet

[BF] BlackWolf, 1:16:26 PM

I have used Nova, Forum SMF, MediaWiki and briefly Astra

Marty, 1:16:38 PM

astra?

[BF] BlackWolf, 1:16:50 PM

@Marty social call in #general-chat 😊

Astra is a plugin software based on Wordpress 😊

[STF] JoeP, 1:17:04 PM

Our current solution is an entirely custom system that's based on the Django web framework. Before that we were on a highly customized copy of Drupal 5.

Captain Graecen 16th Fleet, 1:17:44 PM

I've got some knowledge of wordpress....what did you think of Astra vs Nova vs Forum SMF?

Marty, 1:18:22 PM

i take it astra didn't work as well as the others?

[TF] Kaede Kayano, 1:19:03 PM

I have no idea what Astra is, apart from the Car Vauxhall Astra...

[BF] aio, 1:19:05 PM

@[BF] JonM

[BF] BlackWolf, 1:19:06 PM

I am fan boy of Nova, due that I can easy edit it. Astra is in my opinion in its kids shoes and still needs lot of work. SMF is great software and I would recommend it if you like forum sims. Its admin friendly

[5F] Skippy, 1:19:16 PM

At 5th fleet we are using a custom plugin in WordPress

For fleet stuff I mean

[NDF] Cael Maz, 1:20:43 PM

Mediawiki is great for info but horrid for ship adverts

[BF] Kai1701E, 1:21:07 PM

Astra was great! I loved it. It didn't always function as smoothly as Nova, and I found that unfamiliarity with it put people off. Plus people weren't willing to take the time to get used to it.

[OF] du Lac, 1:21:13 PM

Astra's good for a base, but you need to give it a lot of TLC

says the guy who's got it on github

[5F] Skippy, 1:21:53 PM

Currently on version 2 as version one was basic and after getting some feedback from a couple of people here.

Captain Graecen 16th Fleet, 1:22:25 PM

do you use astra, Skippy, or another plugin?

[OF] du Lac, 1:22:27 PM

and herein lieth the evolution of the Fleet Systems

[5F] Skippy, 1:22:44 PM

Custom plugin I designed myself

[OF] du Lac, 1:22:54 PM

what I've done with IFS2, BF's done with BFMS is to base them off Wordpress as a platform and Skippy's done with his

in OF's and BF's case, this has allowed us to develop a fully custom solution for our fleets, allowing players to add characters, CO's to manage their sims, reports, etc. all from one nice little console on the site

Captain Graecen 16th Fleet, 1:24:08 PM

nice

[OF] du Lac, 1:24:54 PM

it then means we can do stuff like this - <https://www.obsidianfleet.net/sim/ss-mary-rose/>

[5F] Skippy, 1:25:02 PM

The current version I'm using is on github. Its a wip but the core functions are in place

[OF] du Lac, 1:25:12 PM

BF's got similar stuff on their site

<https://www.bravofleet.com/game/11656/>

so players can add their bios, CO's can make their manifests, file reports, manage open positions, etc. and submit news

[5F] Skippy, 1:27:12 PM

<http://5thfleet.net> if anyone's want a look at the front end. So far its org/division/sim nothing else yet

[OF] du Lac, 1:27:15 PM

and in OF's case, the academy and forums are completely integrated

now, the development overhead in both instances of BFMS and IFS2 has been quite high. Took us both roughly 8-12 months to get from a concept to a site

Captain Graecen 16th Fleet, 1:28:50 PM

I'm not capable of making my own "custom" sections. Is there an easy way to integrate something like this? Somewhere I could "get" it? Not trying to steal y'all's work...just don't have some of this know-how

[OF] du Lac, 1:28:54 PM

18 months to "finish"

[STF] JoeP, 1:29:03 PM

Sounds about right

[BF] aio, 1:29:19 PM

And that's not including finding bugs everyone missed lol

[OF] du Lac, 1:29:36 PM

project-khitomer.com

lol, don't remind me @[BF] aio

and I know I'm not finished with IFS2 yet

there's loads I want to do

in terms of releasing it, I'll answer that because it's been DM'ed to me ... IFS2 for this point remains closed source because both us and BF have built these initial versions using custom plugins which we've had to buy commercial licences for

which sucked

and wasn't bloody cheap

Captain Graecen 16th Fleet, 1:31:33 PM

I'm assuming not! Lol

[NDF] Cael Maz, 1:31:42 PM

never is cheap these days 😞

[OF] du Lac, 1:31:48 PM

no 😞

much like Skippy, we're looking to see what we can do to build it custom and develop some open-source solutions for it

at which point it'll likely be released as a suite of tools for wordpress

and believe me, I don't like saying I can't release it

I'd be very happy getting rid of IFS1 installs at this point because it's creaking badly

and both myself and @[BF] JonM are looking to see what we can do to make Astra open-source and not dependent on proprietary software too

Captain Graecen 16th Fleet, 1:35:56 PM

Nice

[OF] du Lac, 1:36:45 PM

what I can say for now though is that if you're using Nova for your sims, Nova 3 will have an API for you to be able to "pull" information into your fleet website

[BF] JonM, 1:36:51 PM

If only my baby wasn't eating all of my time 😊

[NDF] Cael Maz, 1:37:33 PM

Ahhh Nova 3 is going to be frickin sweet when it comes time for release. 😊

[STF] JoeP, 1:37:33 PM

Forgive me if this is an ignorant question, but what's the exact distinction between Nova and a system like IFS?

[OF] du Lac, 1:37:49 PM

Nova runs sims. IFS runs fleets. Different scaling

so Nova at the moment focuses on crew/missions/posts

IFS looks at sims/TF's and the overall structure

[STF] JoeP, 1:38:30 PM

Ahh

So hypothetically, a Fleet would want both, or software that serves both functions

[OF] du Lac, 1:39:01 PM

in an ideal world? yes

[5F] Skippy, 1:39:25 PM

So far I haven't needed any 3rd party licenses with mine

[OF] du Lac, 1:39:42 PM

we used ACF/Toolset Skippy

well, ACF pro and Toolset

[BF] JonM, 1:40:08 PM

Depends on Fleet culture. Many of our Fleets pride ourselves in the innovations that occur at the fringes - aka on the sim sites. There's also some legal distinctions based on ownership/IP/etc. Having one system do both is arguably more problematic than having systems that interoperate.

[5F] Skippy, 1:40:45 PM

Yeah I know. I'm using a public available metabox class to get round some of the limitations

[OF] du Lac, 1:41:02 PM

piklist?

[STF] JoeP, 1:41:08 PM

@[BF] JonM I guess it would be except I kinda wrote one

Largely because I had no idea that these were two separate niches

WiseOwISTF, 1:41:40 PM

I was going to say I think ours does both

though it is difficult to run sims between Fleets with multiple ships

[5F] Skippy, 1:42:22 PM

@[OF] du Lac I'll find the github for the metabox class for you when I get to a pc

[OF] du Lac, 1:42:30 PM

sweet

WiseOwlSTF, 1:42:54 PM

It can be done though with extreme organization

[OF] du Lac, 1:42:55 PM

using toolset and acf probably saved me and Jon a few months

[5F] Skippy, 1:43:11 PM

Main issue I had before finding the metabox class was repeating fields and this solved the problem quite nicely

[OF] du Lac, 1:43:46 PM

ok, since I've got time spare - anyone got any questions they want to ask about FMS's?

Captain Graecen 16th Fleet, 1:46:08 PM

When do you feel it's essential to transfer from a website with multiple ships to one that has fleetwise organization

[OF] du Lac, 1:47:33 PM

probably when you've got more than you can reasonably keep an eye on

I'd personally say 6-8's about as much as you can manage individually

[STF] JoeP, 1:53:43 PM

So the common configuration is FMS plus existing forum? Because the forum (whichever one it is, I take it it could be literally anything) is usually there first and people eventually say "We need a CMS for all this stuff not-in-our-forum"?

[OF] du Lac, 1:54:36 PM

usually 😊

[SA] Wes of Star Army, 1:54:59 PM

My dream is an automated inventory and finance system for characters.

[OF] Kate, 1:55:03 PM

Five minutes remaining!

Marty, 1:56:15 PM

I do hope you release IFS 2 as IFS 1 is failing rapidly. @[OF] du Lac

[STF] JoeP, 1:56:31 PM

I take it you usually run this sort of thing on your own VPS?

[OF] du Lac, 1:57:18 PM

@Marty until we can work round the proprietary then IFS1's all we can do

so that might be a while

[OF] Kate, 1:57:59 PM

Could we please move any further questions to #overflow-two. So we can make room for the new panel here

Marty, 1:58:26 PM

as long as it's not being sold then it shouldn't rough anyone's feathers?

[STF] BusyBeaver, 1:58:34 PM

sets up shop

[OF] du Lac, 1:58:42 PM

I'll go to DM 😊

Capt_G_Shepherd STF, 1:58:56 PM

see the beaver.

WiseOwlSTF, 1:59:14 PM

sits down

Marty, 1:59:14 PM

thanks for the panel @[OF] du Lac

[STF] JoeP, 2:01:10 PM

So from what I just gathered from the last presentation, there's a market for a modern FMS

IFS2 is that modern FMS but cannot be distributed because it's dependent on proprietary software

I assume it's not the kind of issue where you could fix it by charging \$5 or something, e.g. you can't just get a series of reseller agreements for the plugins that the plugin authors would be happy with

[OF] du Lac, 2:13:31 PM

I'd need to swap licencing over to agency licencing for it as the wordpress ecosystem now works on a per-site basis

most stuff works on a per-site per-year

or x sites per year

[STF] JoeP, 2:16:24 PM

Ahhhhhhh

So that would be complicated quickly

To put it mildly

[OF] du Lac, 2:19:05 PM

yup

so for an example, <https://elementor.com/pricing/> - Elementors the most popular page builder for Wordpress but is only really useful in pro flavour

not that we use it

but it gives you an idea

Ahh yeah.

only way we could do it is as a managed service and charge fleets for hosting + licencing

[STF] JoeP, 2:22:14 PM

Have you pitched that?

could guess how that would go

[OF] du Lac, 2:22:31 PM

not even considered it until just then lol

[STF] JoeP, 2:22:49 PM

See, I have thought of that before

Because... I happened to write a solution for the entire stack for purely self interested reasons. What is effectively a FMS and Forum combined, except I didn't design or think of it that way because I was focused on replacing our old site...

... and, because it is python based, I thought "giving this to other people would be a nightmare because it's harder to deploy than your average PHP site, so I'd have to eventually do nearly everything including possibly babysit the machines"...

... and then I thought, "wait... I can't be the only person who wants this even if I'm the only one who could figure it out... and if people are running their own sites, they gotta be paying like \$5 to \$50 a month for hosting on a VPS if they have their own database storage for their posts and a form to post on..."

Then I realized I have no idea how many people that is, but the IP and CBS television is enough to make bending over for what might be only be \$200/month not worth the potential trouble of collecting it

But, I have actually no idea how big the simming/RP community is because I've only been in one club for 10 years, so... ehh?

[OF] du Lac, 2:51:57 PM

big enough, we've got over 200 people here representing at least 150 games that I know of

[STF] JoeP, 3:12:23 PM

Hmm