

Chapter 1.27

Issues in Delivering Course Material via the Web

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INTRODUCTION

Education over the Internet is going to be so big it is going to make e-mail usage look like a rounding error. ~ John Chambers, Cisco Systems, New York Times, November 17, 1990

Web-based courses (Mesher, 1999) are defined as those where the entire course is taken on the Internet. In some courses, there may be an initial meeting for orientation. Proctored exams may also be given, either from the source of the Web-based course or off site at a testing facility. The Internet-based course becomes a virtual classroom with a syllabus, course materials, chat space, discussion list, and e-mail services (Resmer, 1999). Navarro (2000) provides a further definition: a fully interactive, multimedia approach. 2002 figures suggest that over two million students are taking at least one Web course (Thornton, 1999). According to *E-Learning* (2001), more than 3,000 universities will offer substantial Web courses by 2004.

The Web-enhanced course is a blend with the components of the traditional class, while mak-

ing some course materials available on a Web site, such as course syllabi, assignments, data files, and test reviews. Additional elements of a Web-enhanced course can include online testing, a course listserver, instructor-student e-mail, and other activities on the Internet. Navarro (2000) defines this type of course as a “digitized text” approach.

Navarro (2000) suggests that faculty are far more likely to start by incorporating Internet components into a traditional course rather than directly offering Web-based courses. These Web-enhanced courses might be considered the transition phase to the new paradigm of Internet-based courses.

BACKGROUND

A 1999 research study showed that 27.3% of the faculty members think they use the Internet for the delivery of course materials, but only 15.6% actually did so. Of this group, the major use was simply the substitution of a Web page for the

printed page. Most faculty members (73.8%) updated their sites so infrequently that the sites only served to replicate printed handouts. In a follow-up study at the same university, the number of faculty who used Web pages to enhance their courses showed a decrease from the previous year (Garrett, Lundgren & Nantz, 2000). In the same study, 22% of the faculty are not ever planning to use a Web site for delivery of any portion of their courses. Less than 5% are truly

incorporating Web technology into their courses in a meaningful way.

Clearly, there are many positive reasons for using a Web site in a course including greater efficiency in the delivery of materials, providing up-to-the-minute content, enhanced status for the course and faculty, and of course the seemingly inevitable trend to use more technology in education.

Table 1. Classification of academic Web pages

Level	Description	Typical Content	Maintenance Level Required
1	Traditional Course Presentation, Basic-Level Course Materials on Web—Internal Links	Instructor data (name, phone, office hours, e-mail address) Course materials (syllabus, generic schedule, assignments); non-interactive	Low—static pages after initial upload. Low-volume e-mail correspondence.
2	Traditional Course Presentation—Intermediate-Level Course Materials on Web—External Links	All Level 1 Some external links, such as textbook and reference sites; non-interactive.	Low—mostly static pages with occasional updates and checking of external links. Low-volume e-mail correspondence.
3	Traditional Enhanced Course Presentation—Intermediate-Level Course Materials on Web and Web Content Delivery	All Level 2 All traditional course materials posted. Web access in class used for delivery of some course content. Some assignments/requirements involve interaction, e.g., e-mail submissions, listserv postings.	Weekly updates to schedule, FAQ, course materials, notes to students. Medium-volume e-mail correspondence.
4	Traditional Enhanced Course Presentation—Complete Web Content and Materials	All Level 3 Course presentations and lectures dynamically available on Web. Data files, links, programs on Web for students. Forms for student “reply” assignments, course evaluations, etc. Link to course grades.	2-3 times per week. Regular updating of grades. Medium-volume e-mail correspondence.
5	Web-Delivered Course with Orientation and Testing Meetings	All Level 4 plus any additional materials to allow for full Web delivery of course including audio and video augmentation; multimedia CDs. Few or no regular classes—orientation meeting may be necessary. Testing may be proctored off-site or unproctored on the Web.	Daily maintenance and access by instructor. High-level e-mail correspondence. Regular updating of grades and course materials.
6	Virtual Class	All Level 5 plus online testing and orientation. Discussion, chat groups, listserv, e-mail, and other interactive tools. Teleconferencing. No class meetings.	Substantial daily maintenance (average 1-3 hours) by instructor including all course aspects. High-level e-mail correspondence.

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