Part II

WBE Enhancing Technologies

Chapter IV

Selecting Software and Services for Web-Based Teaching and Learning

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As the World Wide Web has developed to be a widespread and reliable communication medium, a wide range of software and services has emerged to support teaching, learning, and collaborative work. These new software and services provide opportunities for supporting and enhancing teaching and learning strategies and practices. There are already many different types of software and services with many providers in each broad category; yet, given the rapid rate of change of the WWW, the specific nature of the software and services, the providers, and perhaps even the categories themselves, will change over time. One issue that teachers face in this new and rapidly changing environment is the choice of software and services to support their teaching and learning activities.

Our goal in this chapter is to develop a model and guide for teachers who want to select software and services that support or enhance learning, and in particular collaborative learning, through the World Wide Web. We are concerned here, not with products and services that require significant investment in time, money, or technical resources, but with simple and low cost software and services that might be used in practice by teachers to support 'every day' teaching and learning, whether at school or on campus or by distance learning.

This chapter introduces a general model for analysis and selection of software and services for Web-based teaching and learning. Some currently available software and services are then reviewed within a classification scheme based on a key dimension of the model: teaching and learning activity. The dimensions of the model form a guide for description of the characteristics of the software and services. The model is then used as the structure for a case study that illustrates how the dimensions of the model can be used by

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