On-Line Presentations: Real-time Collaboration : Best Fit for Your Classroom

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ABSTRACT

There is more competition and greater use of the Internet to support students across space and time. In this study we develop our earlier work (NACCQ 2001) by adapting our software to include bundled free electronic conference and remote application sharing software. "Writers have touted the use of this type of facility as offering endless possibilities or called telelearning, the third generation of distance learning Taylor (2001) cited in (Caladine, 2001). In fact One university has gone as far as running a mandatory staff development course on using computer conferencing (Rice and Bantow, 1999). In this "flurry to create virtual Universities", (Hart and Gilding, 1997 p.263), educational institutes have seen a huge explosion in global education. Bonk, Kirkley, Hara and Dennen (2000) It is only a matter of time until the technology now available is used more extensively by educators. Our applications can include any kind of multimedia produced documents or courseware and it encompasses the original 'peer marking system' developed previously. We, like Monash (Giles, 1997)or the University of Melbourne, (McCrohen, Lo, Dang, and Johnston, 2001) hope to include video streaming in various courses because it has a promising role in online delivery.

Key words: Electronic conferencing Teaching and Learning, Electronic Education, Evaluation, Presentation, On-line Learning, Online Learning, Distance learning,

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE SOFTWARE PRESENTATION SUITE

As an application the 'On-Line Presentation' system was originally designed for the Help Desk (ISCG624) course taught partially online at UNITEC Institute of Technology, Auckland as part of the Business Computing Degree (BCS), however, this version can be used for project reporting, seminars and remotely teaching and learning purposes. The application provides an easy to use interface enabling the creation of a community database on a teaching server. The working database resides in a specially protected directory, which enables all registered users access.

Peer grading, which, according to (Klemm, 1998) is one of the eight ways to get students more engaged in online learning is encouraged in UNITEC. However collecting and analysing the data can be cumbersome

and time consuming for the lecturer. This application makes the task of collecting the marked data, whether in class, or by distance, quick and efficient. The Quick Reporting System developed in Delphi provides timely information in a tight well-formatted manner. Final reports are available within minutes of a completed presentation.

2. THE MODES THE SOFTWARE RUNS IN

The application runs in three modes: student mode, tutor mode and administrator mode.

2.1 ADMINISTRATOR MODE

The administrator creates and manages accounts for the tutor who wishes to use this application within their course and work with online presentations or a series of lectures. These presentations can be by either the lecturer or the students.

2.2 TUTOR MODE

The tutor can create accounts for students who have registered in his/her course and who will require the use of an online presentation application during the course of study. The tutor can also create a community account for students in order to use the audio-video tools provided by SameTimeTM conference server. The tutor can edit or view presentation information deciding which student gives a presentation on a particular date. The tutor can set up marking criteria, which guide others attributing grades to an active presenter. The tutor can view any presentation documents uploaded by students in his/her class together with the presentation grading data. Entering the virtual presentation room, the tutor can control the presentation process remotely, choosing the status from 'Waiting' to 'In-process', 'Marking' or 'Finished'. Whilst in control of the presentation, the tutor controls all student's behaviour, enabling or disabling the student's permissions (to ask questions). The system can produce final reports when presentations are complete.
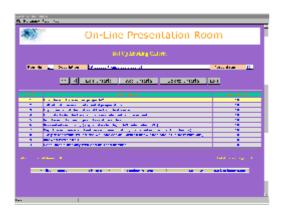
2.3 STUDENT MODE

Students can change their password, list presentation information, upload presentation documents and enter the presentation room to present using audio-video tools, such as screen sharing, whiteboards or chat.

Students may also view the presentation documents in a static way based on whatever development tool was used to prepare these documents. On entering the presentation room, students can conduct real-time communication, such as asking or answering questions. Participants can also attribute marks upon conclusion of a presentation.

3. THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT NEEDED FOR THE SYSTEM

The On-Line Presentation is a complex product, which needs the following supported environment. The pack contains Lotus(r) SameTimeTM
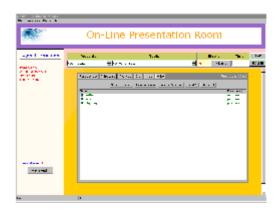

Figure 1: Screen shots of the product Interface

Conference Server, MS Exchange Chat Service, Web server, FTP server. The client end must be installed on Windows 98, Windows NT workstation or Windows 2000 with IE 5.0 (or higher). The Borland database engine must be installed at the tutor client end to support the "Quick Report System". Further details of requirements can be obtained by email from either of the two presenters.

4.   CONCLUSION

As the cost of traditional education spiral whilst the cost of digital storage, manipulation and transmission decreases, more course content will be offered online. This brings up the issue of delivery. The School of Computing and Information Systems (SoCIT) in UNITEC has for example over 40 undergraduate and 10 post graduate courses at least partially on line. Only one of those courses can be taken completely remotely. As bandwidth problems are solved, and computer mediated communication (CMC) in the form of web based conferencing becomes more common place, we expect successful practitioners to utilise this and other software suites. We do not offer this software as an alternative to in-class teaching but if Foley and Shuck (1998) are correct and web base conferencing becomes a more effective learning tool, we must be ready to use it as bandwidth increases. The writers are aware that use of this technology raises issues of equity, training, motivation and pedagogical appropriateness but these and other issues are already being debated elsewhere. Future developments include porting the original 'Peer Marking System' to handheld PDA devices.

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