

Dynamic Content Initiative for Applied Computing Courses

Poster Abstract by Eryne Croquet, Erin Beveridge and Lynda Williams

Nearly every university or college offers courses in applied computing that include some combination of lab and theory. Text books offering solutions are plentiful but tend to come in costly combinations, go out of date quickly and fail to allow for adequate customization.

The Dynamic Content Initiative, based on the successful example of Dynamic Content at UNBC for CPSC 150, applied computing literacy course, offers a possible solution. Adopters gain access to each other's raw material in exchange for being willing to offer their own materials to fellow instructors.

The initiative recognizes that taking advantage of content in a shared repository is not an easy task. Instructors must know where to find it, be confident that all intellectual property rights are cleared and be able to adapt the material to their own uses. Each of these things presents barriers. With the aid of a BCCampus grant, the initiative aims to recruit adopters to take part in a test of concept pilot project, and either to solve to clarify the nature of barriers to content sharing. The repository itself will be kept simple. The focus is on finding out how and whether instructors teaching similar content can collaborate and whether sharing materials will, in fact, reduce work load or enrich the experience of students.

The poster session for the initiative will explain the concept and actively seek to recruit contributors of material or those who may be interested in using material already available.

CPSC 150, an applied computing course at UNBC, created by Lynda Williams, will be used as the initial source of material. All materials in the course, which received an honorary mention in the first annual WebCT Exemplary Course Awards, in 2001, will be available. CPSC 150 is 100% online, featuring a glossary, lectures, many years worth of midterms and final exams, hundreds of quiz questions, about fifteen labs and a variety of other assignments and features. It will be offered both as an entire WebCT course, available for use as raw material, and in pieces. Adopters will be free to use and adapt the material as required.

CPSC 150 at UNBC is a "Dynamic Content" course in an additional, more institutionally specific sense. It uses no text books of any kind. Instead of the former \$180.00 cost to students for lab manuals and theory books, students pay a non-refundable \$30.00 maintenance fee upon registration. The money collected does not go to the instructor but can be used only to pay for improvements to the course, or to other courses under the Dynamic Content umbrella supported by the Centre for Teaching and Learning. Becoming a Dynamic Content course is entirely voluntary for faculty, and implies the acknowledgement that the extensive materials developed cannot become a source of

revenue to the instructor. Net cost to students must also be less, in the Dynamic Content version of the course, than it was prior to its conversion. Dynamic Content fees can be used, however, to pay for course improvements in the form of additional materials, proof-reading, or content creation by hired assistants. The criteria that instructors cannot receive Dynamic Content money is viewed as critical to student acceptance of a Dynamic Content course fee to be used for the maintenance of digital content, instead of purchasing one or more text book. Dynamic Content as practised at UNBC for CPSC 150, however, in no way dictates or restricts the manner in which material drawn from the broader Dynamic Content Initiative may be used. CPSC 150 at UNBC is only one model, and the source of “seed” material.

The Dynamic Content Initiative is provincial in scope, operating on a grant from BCCampus. Dynamic content at UNBC is a project managed by Lynda Williams, of the Centre for Teaching and Learning. For more information on either, contact Lynda Williams, williaml@unbc.ca, (250) 960-5613. For more information on the province-wide Dynamic Content Initiative, and especially to become an adopter, contact Eryne Croquet at croquete@unbc.ca or Erin Beveridge at beveridg@unbc.ca