

Technology

OpenCourseWare Launches at MIT

Last fall, after more than two years of preparation and much fanfare, MIT launched the pilot of its OpenCourseWare (OCW) project. Through OCW, all materials for 32 MIT courses in 16 academic departments and the Sloan School of Management have been made available online for free. For their part, Sloan School faculty members provided course materials for three



courses, including "Introduction to Optimization," "Logistical and Transportation Planning Methods," and "Systems Optimization: Models and Computation."

The materials available online are attracting users worldwide, as well as MIT students who are using the materials to supplement their own notes or to make up for missed lectures. Faculty participation in OCW is voluntary, but MIT officials predict that participation will grow steadily as the project continues. Within the next ten years, the school expects OCW to include the materials for more than 2,000 undergraduate and graduate courses.

The knowledge available through MIT's OCW is free, but course credit is not. Those who take advantage of the online materials will not have an official claim to an MIT education or degree.

Even so, MIT officials believe that OCW promises to "serve as a model for university dissemination of knowledge in the Internet age," according to a school press release. "We are fighting the commercialization of knowledge, in much the same way that open-source people are fighting the commercialization of software," university spokesperson Jon Paul Potts told *News.com*.

OCW is *not* meant to be a means for distance learning, which, by its nature, involves an exchange of information among students and faculty, stress the program's administrators. Rather, OCW is meant to be a source of supplemental educational support for MIT's own students, as well as an aid to faculty from all institutions in developing course content. In addition,

school officials believe the online materials might be especially useful to developing countries seeking to expand their base of knowledge.

According to its Web site, MIT estimates that development costs for the project will initially range from \$7.5 million to \$10 million each year. The project will remain in its pilot phase for at least another year. "Although we have not yet fully designed or decided on our long-term technical architecture and systems, we're committed to using open systems and will share our approach and experiences with those who may want to launch similar efforts," says Anne H. Margulies, OCW's executive director.

Fox School Makes Access to Tech a Priority

Temple University's Fox School of Business and Management in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, has taken two very different approaches to technology on its campus. The goal, says John DeAngelo, the school's associate dean for information technology, is to create an incredibly "tech-accessible" environment for Fox's students and faculty.

The "Digital Concierge" — Rather than require students and faculty to trek to a tech support office with their computer issues, the school decided to bring tech support straight to them via a free-range "digital concierge." David Feeney, director of digital education at the Fox School, roams the business school with a laptop and wireless connection seeking students and faculty in technological distress.

At the beginning of the semester, Feeney sets his laptop up in the school's corridors where students stop by to ask him questions about using Blackboard, the school's platform for its online community. "David helps them change or identify their user names and passwords. He might help them enroll in courses or delete them

from courses where they're inappropriately enrolled," says DeAngelo. Faculty members also can locate him easily for help with classroom technology.

The concept was developed in 2001 as a way to

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San Diego County, California, recently installed a wireless network that reaches from San Diego to San Clemente Island, a span of 72 miles, including a distance over water. The 2.4 gigahertz link will be used to transmit seismicographic and global positioning data, among other information.



David Feeney offers technical assistance as the Fox School's "Digital Concierge."

streamline the school's tech support system and encourage full use of the school's technological offerings, explains DeAngelo. "We thought the idea of a tech support office wasn't satisfactory," he points out. "People are busy and may not take the time to visit the office, which can keep them from using features or equipment they should be using."

By making tech help accessible, the digital concierge has created a tech-savvy community, says

DeAngelo. "Students now know what David knows," he says. "He encourages them to share what they've learned with others. It's become a very efficient vehicle for teaching people how to use the technology."

BizTech Server Lab—Fox's BizTech Lab offers students something they wouldn't get in a typical computer lab, says Paul Weinberg,

professor of management information systems. The lab gives students full access to 16 server-client stations, similar to the server-client infrastructures of large organizations. Built with \$49,000 from a Link-to-Learn grant and partial subsidies from Microsoft and IBM, the BizTech Lab allows students to develop fully formed server applications. Because the lab is partitioned from the school's main servers, students can experiment freely without

compromising any operations of the school's computer system.

Students use the BizTech Lab for a variety of Web services and other network-centered projects, explains Weinberg. "Some students are working with situations in which one server is running JAVA and another is running a .net language," he explains. "In the lab, they can try to get the two languages to communicate using standard protocols." Other students are experimenting with creating mobile servers that are accessible to someone using a Palm Pilot or mobile phone.

"We want our students to be able

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There's no rest for those weary of full e-mail inboxes: IDC, a market research firm headquartered in Framingham, Massachusetts, predicts that the number of e-mails sent per day will reach **60 billion** by 2006, nearly double the **31 billion** messages sent now. The research indicates that this increasing volume will fuel demand for better filtering technology to help users cope with the e-mail onslaught.

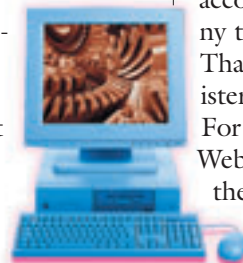
NEWSBYTES

INTEL GIVES GRANT

The University of Washington Business School's new Center for Technology Entrepreneurship has received an \$118,000 equipment grant from Intel Corporation of Santa Clara, Calif. Through the grant, Intel has donated Dell equipment, including flat screen monitors, laptops, and multimedia stations. Founded last year, the center will use the equipment to expand its new venture creation laboratory where students from a number of disciplines can access entrepreneurship-related databases, work closely with inventors, and obtain advice from a number of experts-in-residence.

NEW IT SCHOOL

Last fall, the Singapore Management University added a fourth school in technology to its current schools in business, economics and social sciences, and accountancy. Called the School of Information Systems Management (SISM), the school will open its doors to its first cohort of 50 to 100 undergraduate students in August 2003 and hopes to admit 550 students by 2006. The school's mission, say school administrators, is to produce students who are knowledgeable about business and IT to meet Singapore's growing need for tech-minded business administrators.



INFO IS A HIT

Since it was made available for Web site registrants in September 2001, the ".info" domain has already logged its millionth Web site, according to *Computerworld*. Web addresses in the .com domain have become so hard to obtain that many companies are registering their addresses with the .info domain in tow. About 27 percent of those names registered are now in use, according to Afilias Ltd., the company that maintains the .info registry. That compares to 35 percent of registered .com names in active use. For the record, the one-millionth Web address to be registered under the .info domain went to www.los-angeles-real-estate-search.info.

“The first line of fire will be hundreds of e-mails, phone calls, and visits from excited, sometimes angry, young professionals who think they deserve attention because of the significant sum of money they’re paying to the institution.” —Yann Lechelle, CEO, Etheryl

to solve business problems and understand technological concepts,” says Weinberg. That level of understanding can happen only if students have access to the full range of technology that today’s corporations use, he adds. “In this lab, students have total control over the machines assigned to them. They can try out new technologies, install any type of application, and are free to make mistakes without affecting anything else.”

Online Communities Streamline Admissions

Although most business schools understand the need to process MBA candidates’ applications efficiently, address their questions, and even serve as relocation and transition agents, admissions offices are often understaffed and overwhelmed. While they may send prospective students a welcome package and/or e-mail, the ongoing communication with the student often stops there.

To address this problem, Yann Lechelle, CEO of Paris-based company Etheryl, has developed NetVestibule, a software product designed to manage and encourage an ongoing communications process between prospective students and their new college community. “The level of service at this crucial phase often reaches a bottleneck caused by too many prospects making demands on already overwhelmed resources,” he says. “Incoming students are eager to get started with

the program, so admissions officers are certain to face highly demanding individuals. The first line of fire will be hundreds of e-mails, phone calls, and visits from excited, sometimes angry, young professionals who think they deserve attention because of the significant sum of money they’re paying to the institution.”

NetVestibule is designed to ease this deluge of requests through technology, providing a platform to manage an institution’s relationships with students, from pre-admission to post-graduation, explains Lechelle. The technology creates an exclusive online community space in which accepted students interact and exchange tips with current students. The community includes a bulletin board for asynchronous communication and a chat room for synchronous discussions. Users are also able to post biographies, short resumes, and pictures, and even engage in peer-to-peer e-mailing via password protected accounts.

In 2001, Forrester Research Inc., headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, issued a report on customer relationship management, a close cousin to SRM, or “Student Relationship Management.” The results indicated that support phone calls and e-mails cost, on average, \$33 and \$10 each, respectively. “By transferring some of the repetitive ‘frequently asked questions’ to online communications with current students,” says Lechelle, “an institution may be able to reduce its costs of dealing with prospects and improve

its quality of one-on-one service for serious issues that really do require an admissions administrator.”

When admissions offices lack adequate resources, prospective students are often handed off from marketing to admissions to academic departments, so that their experiences are fragmented, concludes Lachelle. Technology can fill that gap, he adds. Creating a strong online community that facilitates a relationship between accepted students and their future peers can be an effective way to develop the student-to-institution relationship.

Yann Lechelle can be contacted at y@etheryl.com.

Eight Publishers to Offer Material Online

Ebrary, a leading provider of information distribution and retrieval services, recently announced that eight more publishers will make many of their titles available in a digital format. AMACOM Books, American Enterprise Institute, Career Press, CMP Books, Dearborn Trade Publishing, Idea Group, No Starch Press,



and Syngress Publishing have agreed to make hundreds of titles in business, economics, and computers and technology available online to institutional markets.

More than 130 academic, professional, and trade publishers are currently distributing more than 15,000 titles in digital format to libraries and other institutions through ebrary. Two thousand of those titles, most published between 2000 and 2002, are targeted to the business community.

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A record number of Web site defacements—more than 9,000—occurred in September, according to mi2g Ltd., a London security firm. U.S. sites saw the most defacements, 4,157, with most of those related to government. Sites registered to Brazilian users experienced 835 defacements; the U.K., 376; Germany, 356; and India, 285, the IDG News Service reported.

WEBWATCH

■ GMAC

GMAC's recently redesigned site, found at www.gmac.com, is now two sites in one. First, it provides a link to www.mba.com, a site targeting prospective business students to help them research schools and examine their goals. Second, it continues to provide information to

business school professionals, recruiters, and the media, including industry news, curricula and

administrative information, links to industry conference and events, and the results of GMAC's latest surveys of prospective MBAs. Schools are also invited to post their recruitment events on the online calendar at www.mba.com, where students can search by location, date, and school.

■ LPI ONLINE

For online access to leadership assessment and training, visit LPI Online, a new Web site created by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner. The two authors of *The Leadership Challenge* developed LPI, which stands for "Leadership Practices Inventory," at www.lpionline.com. Formerly a print-based off-the-shelf "360-degree" leadership assessment tool, this new Web-based version streamlines the administration of the LPI program. Licenses to LPI Online can be purchased at an introductory price of \$100 per user. To receive the introductory price, use code W0389 online or call 866-888-5159. 