WebCT Week 8: Calendar, Index, and Paths – Tying Things Together

Agenda

Questions/ Comments /Concerns
Index & Paths
Calendar uploading
Calendar and Paths
Next Week’s Topics
Questions from Past Sessions

Resources

If you missed a class or lost a handout, don’t worry! Past handouts are available online in the MIDC’s Document Library. Simply enter the URL below and you will find a category listing of the documents.

http://www.bianca.midc.purdue.edu/MIDCLib.nsf

From this link you should get a screen like the one pictured below. The WebCT documents are listed under the WebCT category. If you are curious about a particular title, click on the link for an overview of the handout.

A brief warning about the Document Library: this area is under development. The look and interface will change in the next six weeks, as the MIDC is in the process of rebuilding its website. Do not be shocked when things look different or are in a different location.
Creating Tests – Design your questions carefully

During Week 6 we covered how to create online tests and quizzes. A question was raised about multiple windows and student access – “can a student be in a quiz and open a window to the course content at the same time?” The answer to this question is yes, it is quite easy to do. Web browsers can pop open as many windows as a user desires (limited by available RAM, of course). This is an easy task – simply go under the “File” menu and select “New” -> “Navigator” (on a Netscape browser; similar options are available with AOL and Internet Explorer). This limitation is not, in fact, limited to WebCT. Any savvy net surfer could pop out of any web-based quiz to an Internet search engine to find a solution to a question.

The technological ease of this task does not, however, mean that you should not use online tests or quizzes in an online class which is content-rich. The solution to this technological dilemma is careful exam preparation. Conceptual, thought-provoking questions will have to be developed in order to avoid simple “net searching for the answers”. With online testing, question design has to be approached in a fashion similar to take-home or open-book evaluation – concepts and analytical ability needs to be evaluated, not memorization and recall.

And now, for this week's topic…

WebCT Week 8: Index, Calendar, and Paths – Tying Things Together

Introduction

The WebCT course tools can be integrated to provide a strong learning environment for students. With some careful planning and development, connections can be made between the course calendar, course content, and content topics which aid the student in accessing the subject matter. This session will cover building links between the three course tools Index, Calendar, and Paths.
Instructions

8.1.0 Index of content

A WebCT Index is an alphabetical listing of key concepts with links to the course content (in the paths). The Index Editor allows you to create a page in your site with keywords and associated links to content pages. When the students view the index, they can jump directly to the page on which a particular index entry is defined.

Why you’d use this feature

- Allows students to access import topics quickly
- Review of key concepts made easier
- Connect content by concepts instead of by course calendar or order of study
- Identify similar topics by having multiple topics with same keyword. Users searching for the keyword will get a listing of all relevant topics.

How does this differ from Paths and the outline generated there?

Typically you’d organize your paths along a course of study; topics build on each other, and (typically) are in order by level of difficulty. An index helps with review by providing an alternative method of categorizing keywords, allowing quick search and retrieve.

How does this differ from the glossary?

A glossary allows you to create quick, brief definitions. Glossary terms are arranged alphabetically, similar to the Index, and glossary terms can be viewed in a complete list. The index forms a searchable reference list linked to the complete content section (thus providing more extensive instruction).

8.1 Creating Index Entries

8.1.1 The Index Editor is accessed from within the Paths section of the site.
Open your class path and select a topic. You will be in the Page Editor designer view, and the Index button will be available to you in the bottom frame. Select this button.

8.1.2 The center frame will show you the Index Editor, and it will present a listing of keywords identified for that particular page (since you just started, your page listing will be blank). Pages can have several keywords; we'll add one now.

8.1.3 Select the "Add Entry" button in the bottom frame.

8.1.4 The center frame will now show the "Index Keyword Addition" menu. Enter a keyword which is descriptive of your path topic. Additionally you can include a brief definition of this instance of the keyword (for example, if you had a keyword microscope, you might have a description for the one reference "scanning microscope parts"). Select "Add" when you are finished.

8.1.5 The Index Editor will now display the added entry (Keyword and description). If you have additional keywords for this path topic, repeat steps 8.1.3 and 8.1.4.

Select the Back button when you have finished the index entries.
You will be returned to the path topic you began with (in the center frame). The bottom frame will show you the path designer's toolbar. If you wish to continue adding index entries for other pages within your paths, select the "Contents" button to return to a listing of all the path topics. Then repeat steps 8.1.1 through 8.1.6.

When you are finished with all your path topics, select "Back Home".

Deleting Index Entries

When in the Index Editor view, the red `x' button to the left of the keyword can be pressed to delete that entry from the Page. A warning menu will pop-up letting you know that this change is irreversible.

Providing Student Access to the Index

In order for students to access the index listing, a WebCT tool icon needs to be added to your class site. The exact placement of this icon should reflect the site design you mapped out in Weeks 1 & 2 of this workshop.

Find the page on which you wish to place the index access icon. Select "Organize Icons" from the designer bar in the bottom frame.
8.2.2 Select "Add"

8.2.3 "WebCT Tool"

8.2.4 Select the "Index" tool. Choose an appropriate title ("Index" or "Course Index") and select Add.

8.2.5 Your site will now have an index area. To see the student view of the index, click on your newly created button.

Course Index:

examples

vector applications

illustrations

plane

river and boat

to

vector

applications
8.2.6 Note that the student view differs from the instructor view. If you view the index from the Index Editor, you will see some additional information.

From the Index Editor (see step 8.1.1 to get into the Index editor), select "View Whole Index" button. Note that this view of the index is slightly different from the student view. Instead of just hyperlinking the description, the actual title of the page is shown in parentheses, so that you can see from which page a particular definition was linked.

| examples       | vector applications (What Can a Vector Do for Me?) |
|               | illustrations |
| plans          | (What Can a Vector Do for Me?) |
| river and boat | (What Can a Vector Do for Me?) |
| vector         | applications (What Can a Vector Do for Me?) |

8.2.7 Searching the Index

8.2.8 To perform an index search, enter the paths section of your course. Select the search icon in the toolbar in the top frame.

8.2.9 Enter your search term into the contains field in the center frame. Select "Index" from the search pull-down menu, and press return or the search button.

The center frame will return a listing of index topics which are limited to your search criteria. This way a student can quickly find all the pages which contain particular topics.
8.3 Uploading Calendar Entries

Creating a course calendar is a useful way to schedule class topics, quizzes, and special events. Admittedly, the single entry method of creating calendar entries (explained in Week 4, D.6-D.9) is a tedious method of entering data. This method shown below will get you a file locally in the correct format for WebCT's upload feature. You can then modify this template quickly and easily, and repost to your course to populate your calendar.

8.3.1 Enter the course calendar area of your site. Choose a date that requires an entry by selecting the date. The central frame should show the "course calendar: view day" menu, stating that there are no entries for this date.

8.3.2 Select New Entry at the top of this frame. For the sample entry, fill in all fields (even optional ones). Note the values you fill in for each field (perhaps you'd want make them outrageous or descriptive. This way you will recognize them when they download in your text file). Also note that entries default to private - be sure to switch the entry over to public.
8.3.3 Select the "Add" button. You should see the new entry on the central panel.

8.3.4 Select the "Compile" button on the designer toolbar in the bottom frame.

8.3.5 Fill in the options on this screen so you will get a match for your newly created entry. Be sure to match the from and to date to the date of your entry, and select the "summary" filter and enter a word you typed into the summary.
8.3.6 WebCT will return a listing which should contain only the newly created entry. Select "Download" to save the file you your local drive.

8.3.7 You now should have a file saved on your computer, one in the correct format for the calendar entries. Example format:

:dd/mm/yyyy,summary,URL,start time(hh:mm),end time(hh:mm),detail

Your file:

:12/11/1998,This is the summary,www.myurl.edu,01:00,22:55,These are the details

8.3.8 Leaving WebCT open to the "compile calendar entries window", open a text editor and copy this example line. Paste the new line into the same document.

:12/11/1998,This is the summary,www.myurl.edu,01:00,22:55,These are the details
:12/11/1998,This is the summary,www.myurl.edu,01:00,22:55,These are the details
8.3.9 Now make changes to the duplicate line. You have a template for the format, so you can alter the duplicated line to reflect actual calendar entries. Repeat steps 8.3.8 and 8.3.9 for as many calendar entries as you have for your course. Be sure there is a return at the end of each line, and a return at the end of the last line.

:12/11/1998,This is the summary,www.myurl.edu,01:00,22:55,These are the details
:15/11/1998,Lesson 6,www.real.com,08:00,09:00,Real Video web broadcast
:18/11/1998,Field Trip,,10:00,20:30,Video production facility tour

Note to fellow Mac users:
The email archives on the WebCT site indicate that there may be some problems with the Mac and the text files you try to upload. Apparently there are some invisible formatting issues that can arise, even when it looks like you are follow the file syntax exactly. I find this very frustrating (as I am sure you do); I will stay on top of this and report back what I can find out. The only way I was able to successfully upload a file was to use a PC.

From Joyce Evans, 8/21/98
http://www.webct.com/webct/docs/mail/aug98/0611.html

> It seems that this error has something to do with the way that Word and simpletext on a Macintosh saves ascii files. There is extra gobble-dy gook (yes, that is the technical term) in the file when it get moved from the Macintosh platform to WebCT.

8.3.10 When you have completed making your calendar entries (and saved the file), return to your browser and the WebCT window. Return to the home page (select "back home") so you can get to the "File Manager".

8.3.11 Select Upload from the lower menubar.
8.3.12 Using the "browse" button, navigate to where you saved the calendar.txt file. Select the file and press continue.

8.3.13 If everything was successful, you will see a message confirming your upload in the bottom frame, and the top right frame should show your data file in the file listing.

8.3.14 Return to the Calendar area and select the "Upload" button on the bottom frame toolbar.

8.3.15 Now you will be in the Calendar Entry Uploading area. Select the browse button.

8.3.16 You will get a pop-up menu which is the WebCT file manager, with access only to files on the server (which is why we had to go through steps 8.3.10-8.3.13). You should see a listing of your course files, and this listing should now include your calendar.txt file. Select this file and press "Pick".
Once you selected the "Pick" button, you should receive confirmation of your selection by a new window displaying all of your entries. You can review your entries for errors, but if they do appear, you will need to edit the file elsewhere (either on the server using the file manager, or locally and reupload the corrected file).

If everything looks good to you, hit the "continue" button, and you will see the calendar with your new entries.
8.4 Calendar linking to Paths

When setting up your course, you may wish to connect the class calendar to the course content (paths). Unfortunately, this is not an easy thing to do. Ideally one would simply copy the URL from the top of the page in the paths view and paste it into the URL area on the calendar entry field. This will not work, however, because of how WebCT serves out the designer view of the course - the URL contains the access level (look in the URL while you are editing your course. It will contain the word "designer".

A method for obtaining the URL involves the uploading of calendar entries. While you have a file downloaded locally for editing, you could simply could log into your course as a student, surf over to the paths, and select the URL of the appropriate path (and right click on it and copy it). Then, in your text editor, paste the URL to the proper section of the line.

8.4.1 Open the calendar text file you have saved locally (see steps 8.3.1 thru 8.3.7 to get this file if you don't have one saved locally). Quit out of your browser completely and then launch it again, this time as a student (note: you will need to have a student account in which you know the password. Generally it is a good idea to have this observer account so you can verify settings).

8.4.2 Navigate to the course path which you want a calendar entry for.

8.4.3 Copy the URL from the browser location of the path desired.

8.4.4 Paste this (long) URL into the local calendar text file.

8.4.5 Repeat this method for each calendar entry you wish to link to a path.
Bibliography

Getting Started Tutorial for WebCT. (Version 1.2).  
http://www.webct.com/

WebCT Help files. (1998). WebCT  
University of Iowa Staff Training Manuals, nTitle, WebCT Module.  