Bringing the Library to You: Integrating Library Resources into Online Classrooms

This handout, a video presentation, and sample code are available here: http://library.rit.edu/desire2learn/

All courses in Desire2Learn have a “myLibrary” link.

The myLibrary link is a URL that passes the “OrgUnitCode” and “RoleID” as parameters to a ColdFusion page.

To create the URL in Desire2Learn, simply edit the Nav Bar and include the parameters like this:
http://ellie.rit.edu:1214/course.cfm?CourseNum={OrgUnitCode}&Role={RoleID}

Here is a sample URL, with the parameters filled in:
http://ellie.rit.edu:1214/course.cfm?CourseNum=400357101.20051&Role=577

The ColdFusion page parses the course number and role to figure out what information to display. For example:

CourseNum=400357101.20051
40 = College of Information Technology & Computing Sciences
03 = Software Engineering Program
571 = Course Number
01 = Section number
20051 = 1st Quarter of 2005 (Fall, 2005 quarter)

Role=577
577 = faculty view

The ColdFusion page is aware that the user is a faculty member or instructor for the course, so special links just for faculty are shown.

The Find Articles, Subject Guides, and Select Websites tabs include content appropriate for the college or program of the CourseNum.

If the course number exists in the course reserve module of the library’s online catalog, it pulls the titles, creates links, and displays them on a Reserves tab. If there are no reserves for the course, the reserve tab is not displayed.

Contact Information for each subject specialist librarian is displayed based on the College and Program.
Project Details/Notes:

The ColdFusion pages are hosted on a Microsoft Internet Information Server / ColdFusion MX server. A similar project could be accomplished with PHP on a Unix server. It was matter of convenience that the RIT Library chose ColdFusion and MS IIS.

This is not a database driven application. All logic is stored within the ColdFusion pages themselves. All content exists as web pages already on the Library’s main web server. At some point, this application may change to a database driven one, should the logic involved in providing the resources and links become too involved to be contained within the ColdFusion pages themselves.

The integration of library course reserves is accomplished using an ODBC connection to the library’s online catalog – an Innovative Interfaces Millennium System. Libraries without an ODBC connection to their library system might have difficulty pulling course reserves.

The integration of Library Resources is scalable for each program and department. Each individual subject specialist librarian can decide how far and at what level they want to supply resources – the college, program, or course level.

Sample URLs (these are actual URLs with real course content as of August, 2005).

| Student view of a course with library reserves | http://ellie.rit.edu:1214/course.cfm?CourseNum=400357101.20051&Role=575 |
| Faculty view of the same course | http://ellie.rit.edu:1214/course.cfm?CourseNum=400357101.20051&Role=577 |
| Student view of a course without library reserves | http://ellie.rit.edu:1214/course.cfm?CourseNum=052210101.20051&Role=575 |
| Student view of a distance learning course with reserves | http://ellie.rit.edu:1214/course.cfm?CourseNum=068832590.20051&Role=575 |

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