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Introduction to the World Wide Web: A Tutorial

Simha R. Magal
Bowling Green State University, smagal@cba.bgsu.edu

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Simha R. Magal
Department of Accounting and MIS
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, Ohio, 43403
(419) 372-2932
smagal@cba.bgsu.edu

Rationale

The global information infrastructure, or the INTERNET, represents an evolution in technology that merges computers, telecommunications, and other information technologies to provide integrated, global access to data, voice, graphics, and video. This new level of integration has significant consequences for commerce and education. It will allow businesses to overcome barriers that geographic boundaries have traditionally imposed. It will be possible to market, and sometimes deliver products and services electronically. From electronically accessible leaning resources (e.g., libraries) to virtual (electronic) classrooms, these technologies will have the capability to revolutionize the delivery of education.

However, to be able to harness the opportunities offered by these technologies, IS educators and professionals must first understand these technologies. One way to facilitate this learning is a **series of tutorials** that will provide an introduction to these opportunities, and identify resources that can be used to become proficient in these technologies.

The World Wide Web (Web) is an Internet service that provides an easy-to-use interface to hypertext-based information resources available via the global information infrastructure. The Web also encompasses most other Internet resources such as FTP and Gopher.

This tutorial, aimed at IS educators, explores the opportunities that the Web offers in the traditional academic areas of pedagogy, curriculum, research, and administration.

Opportunities in Pedagogy

The emerging information infrastructure provides the opportunity to incorporate these technologies to improve the delivery of education, ranging from improved communication to better access to information resources.

For example, students can communicate via electronic mail, participate in newsgroups, access the online catalogue of library resources, transfer files electronically, etc. Local newsgroups and mailing lists can be created to facilitate discussion between students and faculty. Announcements, instructions for projects, etc. can be periodically posted to these newsgroups.

Class notes, overheads, handouts, etc., can be made available via anonymous FTP, Gopher or the Web. The use of these tools to improve teaching effectiveness is still evolving as more capabilities are made available and our understanding of these technologies increases. In the short run, these technologies will provide students with easy access to a variety of information resources to enhance their learning experiences. In the long run, concepts such as distance learning and virtual classrooms may become commonplace.

Opportunities in Curriculum

In addition to utilizing these technologies to improve teaching effectiveness, it is necessary to incorporate these technologies and related issues into the curriculum. As it relates to the general business curriculum, students must develop the basic skills necessary to navigate the vast network of resources to become effective managers. This has implications for modifications to the required MIS course for all students in the College of Business Administration. For students specializing in MIS (and other related disciplines), it is necessary to master these technologies as they will be responsible for creating, delivering, and managing them. This has implications for modifications to existing MIS courses and/or creation of new courses.

Opportunities in Research

Applications related to research range from those aimed at easing collaboration with colleagues to data collection and electronic publishing. However, the greatest opportunities are in conducting research on issues related to electronic commerce. While numerous electronic malls and shopping networks have been established, their successes have been limited. This may be due to concerns regarding access, censorship, privacy, usability, literacy, security, misuse, legality and other issues. However, much of the evidence remains anecdotal and organized research on these issues is virtually nonexistent.

Opportunities in Administration

Opportunities exist for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of administrative tasks as well. These technologies may be used for advertising programs and accomplishments, more effective processing of applications, developing electronic placement services, etc.

The Tutorials

A series of electronic tutorials is being developed to assist IS educators and practitioners in harnessing the value the global information infrastructure has to offer. These tutorials are available at the following URL: http://www.cba.bgsu.edu/amis/smagal/tutorial/

The tutorial presented at the Inaugural Americas Conference, Association for Information Systems (AIS), is the first of this series. The aim is to introduce the participants to these

technologies and provide them with the capabilities and skills necessary to explore the Web. The key **learning objectives** of this tutorial are to:

1. understand what the World Wide Web is all about,
2. understand the relationship between the Web and other Internet services,
3. understand and appreciate the capabilities and potential of the Web,
4. understand and be able to exploit the strategic opportunities offered by the Web,
5. be able to acquire and install a Web browser,
6. be able to effectively navigate through the Web,
7. be able to develop effective search strategies to acquire webbased resources, and
8. understand the key issues related to the Web and related technologies

ISWorld Net

In addition, there is ISWorld Net, a global initiative whose mission is to "provide information management scholars and practitioners with a single entry point to resources related to information systems technology and promote the development of an international information infrastructure that will dramatically improve the world's ability to use information systems for creating, disseminating, and applying knowledge."0 ISWorld Net is accessible at the following URL: http://www.isworld.org/mis/iswnet/home2.html

Endnotes

1 IS World Net Mission Statement, http://www.isworld.org/mis/iswnet/home2.html