Chapter XXI

Conceptualizing a New CMS Design

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the characteristics and requirements for the Next Generation of Course Management System (CMS). The chapter begins with a survey of the current CMS systems elaborating on understanding the current CMS user interface design, understanding the next generation of CMS users, and understanding the forthcoming models for future courses and degree programs. The chapter concludes with painting a picture of the next generation of CMS software environment being characterized as offering smart services, featuring advanced controls, and offering comprehensive software environment.
Introduction

The CMS market continues to grow, and today it would be difficult to find a higher education institution not using CMS. CMS technology is steadily cultivating acceptance among educational institutions, especially those that offer distance learning courses and degree programs. The current system is substantially more user-friendly and sophisticated than the original systems introduced in the late 1990s, and the authoring and navigation schemes of most current systems are based on a template-based design.

In this chapter, I will endeavor to paint a picture of the next-generation of course management system, or CMS, a new software environment featuring a shrewd navigational scheme, a smart technology framework, and creative tool sets. The future of CMS promises to bring depth and color to what is now symbolically a rather flat, black and white system. Before I begin, however, I will posit my understanding of the current CMS technology and capabilities for both those CMS systems developed by commercial vendors and the homegrown systems developed internally within educational institutions.

Understanding the Current CMS User Interface Design: How It Happened and Why

The CMS was originally developed as a complement to classroom instruction, a Web-based software technology to connect students and instructors anywhere, anytime. The initial systems, such as the early versions of WebCT™ in the late 90s, offered a basic series of communication and management tools. Instructors were expected to pick and package various tools to create the user interface by appropriately placing those choices on their course Web site. This development was welcomed by those who desired the freedom to design their own course Web site but was considered a challenge to those who lacked knowledge on how to design a course Web site and insight into how to develop a receptive user interface system.

The notion of the “pick-and-package” course Web site was soon replaced with easy-to-use, template-based designs present in most current systems, both vendor-created and homegrown. Oncourse, an enterprise course management