Web Portal: Total Challenge

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ABSTRACT

The Web is an extraordinary success, for its simplicity. This simplicity has brought disadvantages, because with vast amounts of information available, the search is a difficult, time-consuming and sometimes inefficient task, creating the need for a strategic information management. To overcome this need came the portals. The characteristics of portals differ from each other, which made them appear different definitions. Also arose several classifications of portals, one of which considers three dimensions to classify them: the scope of content, the aim of the portal and the range of its intended users. With this work, the authors intend to build a Web Portal to support one or more serious games. A database is shared with the Web Portal. This portal will serve to make an interface between the user and the games, for the dissemination and support of these and as a platform for managing and monitoring results.

Keywords: Database, Information, Information Management, Interface, Monitoring, Web Portal

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Internet, and in particular, the Web has expanded continuously, both in dimension and technology used making electronically available a large amount of information. Therefore, it is an amazing success, both in available information and at the rate of growth in the number of users. Its success is based on the simplicity it offers, allowing ease of access to new contents, to the software developers, information providers and users. However, the same simplicity that made possible the staggering Web growth also brought disadvantages which prevent it develops further. These disadvantages are in the lack of ability that the Web has to make information accessible for users in an efficient manner (Gouveia, Oliveira, & Varajão, 2007; Lausen et al., 2004).

The volumes of information in digital format have been growing an exponential form, lying scattered in various databases, what makes difficult the search and limits the profit that can be drawn from such information (Figueiredo, 2005). “Searches are imprecise, often yielding matches to many thousands of hits” (Ding & Fensel, 2001).

The need to analyze information from diverse sources makes redundant this information, which is one of the greater problems of the decision makers (Marwick, 2001).
It is not possible to directly retrieve a certain piece of information, being necessary to read all the retrieved documents, and only then identify the intended information manually. The research, access, extraction, interpretation and processing of information becomes, then, a difficult and time-consuming task (Lausen et al., 2004).

Therefore, it is necessary to manage all information and the solution to these limitations lies in the implementation of Web Portals. Web Portals provide facilities for users to find interesting information, according to their personal preferences, themes, etc. (Dias, 2001; Lausen et al., 2004).

Thus, we propose as an aim for this article, building a Web Portal to support one or more serious games. These games are not built into the Web Portal; they are a standalone application that communicates with a database, which is also shared with the games Portal. The Web Portal plays no direct role in running the games. It will have two main functions, one addressed to users and other researchers. Regarding the former, the Web Portal will serve to make an interface between the user and the games and for the dissemination and support of these. The second will serve as a platform for managing and monitoring results, which are crucial for research to be undertaken.

WEB PORTALS

It is true that the Internet has remarkably grown in recent years and, therefore, users feel lost in the midst of such complexity. In the knowledge society we live today, we must have relevant, organized, with quality and easy access information. Therefore it is necessary to make a strategic information management and develop processes to manage the informative chaos of the digital age, so that users can find a way to carry out their researches, with a greater quality, productivity, quickness and profitability. The answer to this need arose in the form of portals that are entry points to the Internet, with directories, news and links to other web sites related to their content. They present a set of important features in the interface allowing the use by people without technical expertise, thereby facilitating the understanding of the system (Warner, 1999; Carani & Nascimento, 2007).

Carani and Nascimento (2007) reported that, according to Microsoft Corporation, a portal is, in general, a web site that adds, in a contextual way, information, applications and relevant services. Through a unique interface to meet the needs and interests of the user, the portal provides a direct response to the large variety and complexity of the online world.

The quick evolution of technology, following the strong growth of the information, made appear in a few years, numerous portals that have, between them, very different characteristics. Therefore, several authors have presented different definitions and the terms Portal or Web Portal were used to define a very broad range of types of websites, which can vary from a simple online catalog to complex solutions of the Intranet (Zirpins, Weinreich, Bartelt, & Lamersdorf, 2001).

Classification of Web Portals

According to Zirpins et al. (2001), taking into account the aims of the users and the information services offer, we can identify two fundamental classes of Web Portals: Horizontal Portals or Consumer Portals and Vertical Portals. Horizontal Portals or Consumer Portals are websites that act as universal entry points to the Internet. They offer search resources, web catalogs, messaging services, news, online shopping and free home pages. Most of the traditional search engines became Consumer Portals. Otherwise, the contents and services offered by Vertical Portals, also called Vortals, are intended to consumers with specific tasks, to people in certain places or to communities with individual interests.

Still according to Zirpins et al. (2001), in the class of Vortals can be considered three subclasses: Enterprise Information Portals (EIP), also called Corporate Portals, Intranet Portals and Industry Portals or B2B. EIP allow
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