Management of Multimedia in E-Learning Environments

Ibrahim Alkore Alshalabi and Eman Abdelfattah
University of Bridgeport
Bridgeport, CT 06604

Session: Tools, techniques, and best practices of engineering education for the digital generation

Abstract- E-learning and distance education are growing very fast. Finding the best way to deliver quality education needs us to think how we can improve and manage the content of documents especially multimedia.

The importance of using multimedia for E-learning is the key factor of success for any E-learning system. There are many tools available to create media such as images, audio and video. However, documents that include several forms of media at the same time might distract the student during the learning process.

We believe that loading several forms of media in the same page but not in the same time can be achieved by providing synchronization to these media through services that support all the requirements that media need. In this paper, we will discuss and examine some of multimedia applications that can provide support for E-learning system.

1. INTRODUCTION

The application of information and communications technology to education and training, both in the corporate and public sectors is now a big business on a global scale [1]. The World Wide Web and web-software have created the possibility of delivering compelling electronic-learning to new groups of learners, and give us the chance to deliver content that is truly interactive and media-rich.

We are looking to create websites that are truly interactive to deliver High Distance Education Quality (HDEQ). This can be done by integrating our site with different multimedia that have the ability to deliver HDEQ and fast services for groups of learners. It is important to understand that every media you add to your webpage and the type of the tools that you are using to add the media will affect the speed of services that we are looking for, also how to manage the
number of media in the webpage plus the architecture of the group of media in the same
webpage or even in the web site. To determine how well they fit our application requirements
and development capabilities we will discuss some tools in section 2, 3 and 4 that are used to add
multimedia to a website and what is the primary use for each one of them.

2. **E-LEARNING MODE**

There are two types of learning mode; synchronous and asynchronous [6]. In the
asynchronous E-learning mode all the e-learning materials are archived and stored, so they can
be accessed at any time which implies that little bandwidth is needed. The synchronous E-
learning (real time) mode means to transfer information without delay. Support of real-time
interaction can be achieved by not only interfacing with simple text form but also by interfacing
with audio hide resources, application sharing, and whiteboard media. It also allows checking
attendance by teacher, floor control for question/answer and supporting toolbox for the
convenient interactive learning [6].

3. **AUTHORWARE**

Authorware is widely used in the teaching field and was used to develop many multi-media
teaching CD-ROMs. Authorware is based on advanced technology, fully functional, and has a
good interface [2]. Authorware can be integrated with multiple formats of external images,
audio, text and video. Although Authorware is a good tool to create multimedia courseware, it is
not good enough for distance education or e-learning systems that are using networks or the
Internet because Authorware’s web player is not preinstalled on major browsers and operating
systems which is time consuming to download and install. Furthermore, Authorware does not
support or provide tools that help the programmer to write code instead of drop and drag buttons
which restricts the programmer. The main problem with Authorware is that distance education
using broadcasting system allows teaching of several students at the same time, but the
interaction of several students at the same time and the interaction between teacher and students
are impossible and it is merely a method of transferring information or knowledge that cannot
provide additional assistance immediately according to students' comprehension level of content
being taught [3].
4. **DIRECTOR SHOCKWAVE**

Web based multimedia tutorials are being developed for use in several undergraduate courses in Electrical Engineering and Computer and Systems Engineering at Rensselaer [5]. These interactive learning modules (ILMs) are created with the Director authoring environment and can be deployed using a standard Web browser with Macromedia's Shockwave plug-in as the interface [5]. The Director Shockwave is a good tool for creating and developing e-learning web-based material with multimedia contents. There are set of features and attributes that make Director Shockwave useful for creating and synchronizing different type of media. One feature allows synchronization of set of medias on the web by grouping them. Director Shockwave has script language called Lingo which provides an ability to control the media and control the flow of the different medias. This feature allows the instructor to enable or disable some features of the course medias during the online class. These features are good for creating and maintaining rich medias. The disadvantage is that the instructor(s) cannot track the student data or the interactivity between the students themselves or between the student and the instructor.

5. **MACROMEDIA FLASH**

A multimedia learning object is defined as an animation that includes a combination of text, graphics, sound, and video packaged together. Unlike the standard lecture mode, learning objects allow flexibility and round-the-clock access to the students. Students typically run the learning objects from a compact disc (CD) or from a website [6]. At present time, the Macromedia Flash was established as a standard for creating of interactive multimedia animations for web or CDROM. Basically, Macromedia Flash is a vector-drawing editor [7]. The Macromedia Flash has a time line that can contain multiple layers as Director Shockwave. The main domain of Macromedia Flash is animation [7]. The usage of vector graphics in animations results in very small files. It is possible to synchronize medias and make interactive animations by using the Macromedia Flash ActionScript language. Macromedia Flash 5 can also make animations on the fly by Macromedia Generator tool [7]. The date for generating animations can input from ODBC or SQL databases [7]. From the result of using vector graphics in animation resulting very small files that can be used on the web and performing a good job for delivering rich-media over low bandwidth connections. Macromedia Flash is an excellent software that allows stepwise analysis of each operation or explanation [7]. Interactive multimedia enables the web presentations to be
dynamic and presents information in a nonlinear format that is easier to comprehend for the learners. Macromedia Flash is available on most systems and the web sites. The disadvantage for Macromedia Flash is that we can not track the student data and it does not provide any support for digital video. Moreover, the interactivity between the students themselves or between the students and the instructor are missing.

6. BUILDING AN INTERACTIVE COURSE WITH RICH MULTIMEDIA

To build an interactive course with rich multimedia is a hard task (Fig. 1). Merely flinging media on the web pages and other materials without any controls and management will not create web site that is truly interactive to deliver High Distance Education Quality (HDEQ). However most educators agree that, in the design and development of educational material, attention must be focused on learner’s requirements and characteristics, defined in terms of contents (what to learn) and of learning styles (how to learn) [1], [2].

7. MULTIMEDIA MANAGEMENT

To control and manage multimedia that is related to the online course, the need of the session access is essential (Fig. 2). The instructor creates initial session (session manager) that gives him/her the ability to control all the sessions that are created during the online connection to the course, which means that all the students connected to the course environment can be controlled to access a specific media or restrict it. Also, initial session allows admission of late comers and early withdrawal of students. This capability of the initial sessions allows a better utilization of bandwidth [5].

---

**Fig 1:** Interactive Course with rich Multimedia.
8. **Multimedia Order**

There are many reasons for tracking data about multimedia order that can be controlled by the instructor for an online-learning course. If the course is mandatory or it is required to meet an order or compliance requirements, you will need to monitor and track learners’ progress and which type of media they are looking for. Another approach is to reorder the flow of different types of media by implementing some form of knowledge management to see what is the common request of media from the student’s side.

![Diagram of Multimedia Management System (MMS)](image)

**Fig 2: Multimedia Management System (MMS)**

9. **Conclusion**

The importance of using multimedia for E-learning is the key factor for any E-learning system. However, documents including all media at the same time will affect the course and the student, leading to less comprehension from the student side. In this paper, we proposed an e-learning environment containing rich media. The proposed multimedia management gives the ability to control and manage the access and the order of the media that are provided during the online course.

We present three tools that are used to design the courses with rich media. We explain for each tool its strengths and weaknesses and how we can improve it to help us creating an interactive multimedia course.
REFERENCES


[4] Seok Soo Kim; Dae Joon Hwang; DooRae distance home study system on DooRae framework for integrated home information service. ISCE '97 - Proceedings of 1997 IEEE International Symposium on Consumer Electronics. 2-4 Dec. 1997 Page(s):75 - 78


Biographies

Ibrahim M Alkore Alshalabi

Ibrahim M Alkore Alshalabi received the B.Sc. in Computer Science from Al-Isra Private University, Amman ON, Jordan in 1997, and the MCA( Master of Computer Applications ) from Bangalore University - India in 2007. In 2009 he joined University of Bridgeport as Ph.D. student in computer science and engineering at the University of Bridgeport, Connecticut-USA.

From 1997 to 2004, he was Assistant Lecturer in Ma'an Community College - Al-Balqa Applied University-Jordan. From 2007 to 2009 he joined Al-Hussein Bin Talal University-Jordan as assistant lecturer. Ibrahim M Alkore Alshalabi has research interest is in the general area of E-Learning, M-Learning, wireless communications and networks.
My email address: ialkorea@bridgeport.edu

Eman Abdelfattah

Eman Abdelfattah had received the MS Degree in Computer Science from the University of Bridgeport in 2002. She worked as a programmer and computer teacher in several places in the period from 1983 to 2000. Also, she worked as a C++ and Java instructor in the Continuing Education Department, Housatonic Community College, Bridgeport, Connecticut. Currently, she works as an adjunct instructor at the University of Bridgeport.

Eman Abdelfattah has research interests in the areas of networking and communications. Her research results were published in prestigious international conferences in circuits and VLSI design. She actively participated as a committee member of the International Conferences on Engineering  Education, Instructional Technology, Assessment, and E-learning EIAE 05, EIAE 06, EIAE 07, EIAE 08 and EIAE 09.