

Extending the OCW Experience in the OCW Sandbox

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Abstract

“Wouldn't it be great if MIT OpenCourseWare...”

How many times have you heard this phrase? What if there were a sandbox in which we could test and experiment with the tools and services that might prove useful to OpenCourseWare visitors, and more generally open educational resource content providers? The Office of Educational Innovation and Technology at MIT is setting up just such a sandbox, through the Greenfield project, to experiment with innovative experiences built on a mirror copy of MIT OpenCourseWare.

Keywords

OpenCourseWare, OCW Sandbox, Greenfield project, i.Experience

1 About the Project

What are the possibilities for OpenCourseWare (OCW) at MIT to go beyond a simple publication of courses and course materials? What if there was a sandbox in which to experiment with tools, services and techniques to extend OCW from a publication to an innovative educational experience? The MIT Office of Educational Innovation and Technology (OEIT) setup a new site, the Greenfield project (greenfield.mit.edu), to allow us to experiment with answers to these questions.

The Greenfield project comes out of discussions with MIT faculty, and the power of third-party/external Web 2.0 tools and technologies to interact with sites such as MIT OCW. In the last year, MIT faculty have approached OEIT to discuss how we might extend OCW. They have asked us to help them overlay a concept-based organization scheme on top of Physics content. They have also asked us to help combine existing content (and videos) in different ways. These discussions with MIT faculty convinced us that the time was right to begin experimenting with MIT OCW.

Our first experiment in the Greenfield project is the i.Experience mirror of MIT OCW. By using a mirror copy, upon which tools and services can be

deployed to extend the impact of OCW, we do not burden the existing published site. It is important to remember that MIT OCW is a publication of courses and provides a snapshot of the course materials used by MIT faculty.

The tools and services that we plan to include in the first release of the i.Experience mirror include a simple content recommender system and the SpokenMedia video player (spokenmedia.mit.edu). The content recommender is based on the same code developed for the OER Recommender/Folksemantic.com (www.folksemantic.com). OEIT is running a custom instance of the recommender software that currently provides recommendations of only MIT OCW courses to one another.

The second of the new tools planned for i.Experience, the SpokenMedia video player, provides an improved user experience for the video player and transcript currently in use on MIT OCW. For example, for one of Walter Lewin's Physics lectures, the user can play an embedded video but if he/she wants to read the transcript he/she has to scroll over twenty screens to read along. All the while not being able to see the video. The SpokenMedia video player allows the user to follow along in the transcript side by side with the video.

These are just the first two examples of the innovative experiences we plan to bring to the Greenfield project. As the project progresses, we plan to work with MIT faculty to implement some of the experiences they would like to see based upon the published OCW content.

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