

IBM WebAdapt2Me Goes to College

Overview

▪ **The Challenge**

Administrators at California State University, Long Beach wanted to find new technology that would make the Internet easier to use for students, staff and faculty with disabilities.

▪ **The Solution**

The campus staff chose WebAdapt2Me software, invented by the IBM Research Division, to allow Internet users to individually customize the way they view information online.

▪ **The Benefit**

Now campus community members – as well as alumni – can more easily access a variety of Web sites and Web applications, helping the University realize its vision of full inclusion.

California State University, Long Beach: A Proud History of Diversity



California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) – one of the 23 schools in the California State University system – is a lively, urban campus. The university attracts older students who are working while attending school, as well as adults who are retraining for new careers. The campus also draws maturing students with its Senior Citizen Education Program, which offers courses taught by retired professors and reduced tuition for students 65 and older.

The campus community embraces and celebrates its diverse population. And, with more than 300 campus clubs and organizations sponsoring events like Black History Month, Cinco de Mayo and Women's History Month, students and faculty alike feel welcome and at home.

As part of its commitment to diversity, the campus administration has worked since the university's founding in 1949 to maintain a vigorous equal opportunity program. That program promotes full inclusion of every member of the campus community, including students, staff and faculty with disabilities, and people experiencing age-related vision or hearing loss.

In conjunction with its equal opportunity program, California State University, Long Beach instituted policies to meet:

- Requirements from the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Guidelines set by the World Wide Web Consortium to give people with disabilities equal access to the Internet.
- Recent California legislation that requires text books used by the state college system to be available on the Internet.

However, Professor Wayne Dick, chair of the CSULB computer engineering and computer sciences department, thought the campus could go one step further. Dr. Dick, who has had low vision since birth, thought there must be a technology that could help students and faculty who have visual, mobility, and learning impairments have easier

access to Web-based information and applications.

In researching the possibilities, Dr. Dick came across a scientific paper written by Dr. Vicki Hanson, manager of accessibility research for the IBM T.J. Watson Research Center in Yorktown Heights, New York. In her article, Dr. Hanson described new software, IBM WebAdapt2Me, which helps people with various disabilities customize the way they browse the Web.

For example, people with low vision can change the size of the type, the color and the contrast of the page for easier viewing and change the page layout for easier navigation. People with learning disabilities can reduce the visual clutter of the page so they can follow the text more easily, and, if they choose, have the computer read aloud the content of pages. People with motor limitations can set preferences that make the mouse and keyboard easier to use. Once students and faculty set up their IBM WebAdapt2Me user preferences, the software can remember the settings from session to session.

Technology to serve people with disabilities: One size does not fit all

Professor Dick thought the software sounded just right for use on campus.

"I love the WebAdapt2Me name," Professor Dick said, "because, when it comes to disabilities, one size does not fit all." That's because people with disabilities can have a wide range of challenges — from vision problems to motor impairments to learning disabilities — yet, he explained, they can benefit from WebAdapt2Me.

We have 10,000 people with disabilities in the California State University system. We could have 10,000 different accommodations. Or we could provide them with WebAdapt2Me.

Dr. Wayne Dick, Chair
Computer Engineering &
Computer Sciences
California State University,
Long Beach

Indeed, because users of IBM WebAdapt2Me can set up their preferred way of viewing the Web, anyone can benefit from using the software, regardless of ability.

IBM provided the university with 200 licenses of WebAdapt2Me as part of an IBM Global Services accessibility consulting engagement. IBM also provided software—including IBM WebSphere® Application Server and IBM Tivoli® Directory Server—that allows the university to integrate IBM WebAdapt2Me into the university's Web delivery environment. IBM also is providing configuration, installation, maintenance and support services.

Drs. Hanson and Dick helped launch IBM WebAdapt2Me at the university by teaching a group of 10 students and professors – called “adventurers” – to use the software. The group included a drama student and a history professor and people, as Dr. Dick said, “who are not afraid to experiment.”

With feedback from the 10 early adopters, the university is now making IBM WebAdapt2Me available to anyone on campus who is interested. Users include students studying gerontology who want to learn about the latest devices to help older adults.

Transforming the Educational Experience

For Dr. Dick, who earned his Ph.D. in math without ever being able to see the equations his professors were writing on the chalkboard, IBM

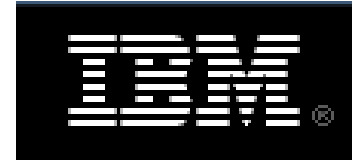
WebAdapt2Me “turns every computer into a reading machine.”

When he was a college student himself, Dr. Dick relied on people who read his text books to him. He also used the early “talking books” that were recorded on thick vinyl and played with machines that were heavy and awkward to use.

Today, he revels in being able to use his hand-held tablet computer and IBM WebAdapt2Me to read information from the Web anywhere he goes. Here's one simple pleasure: he can now carry his “reading machine” into the living room or kitchen to read rather than isolating himself from the rest of his family at home. He can even read in bed for the first time in his life.

Frances West, director of IBM's Human Ability and Accessibility Center said that the company is committed to innovation that matters. “IBM has a long history of inventing technology,” she said, “that transforms the way people learn and live.”

Meanwhile, members of the CSULB community with a wide range of disabilities—from older students who are experiencing minor hearing and vision loss to people who use wheelchairs—are beginning to use IBM WebAdapt2Me. The software is helping them to easily and efficiently access the Web from home or from school, study their online textbooks, and catch up on the latest university news and events. And that is what full inclusion is all about.



For more information

To learn more about accessibility at IBM, visit: ibm.com/able

To learn more about California State University, Long Beach visit: <http://www.csulb.edu/>

© Copyright IBM Corporation 2006-03-15

IBM Corporation
Human Ability and Accessibility Center
11400 Burnet Road
Austin, TX 78758
U.S.A.

Printed in the United States of America
03-06
All Rights Reserved

IBM, the IBM logo, WebSphere and Tivoli are trademarks or registered trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation in the United States, other countries, or both.

Other company, product and service names may be trademarks or service marks of others.

This customer success story is based on information provided by California State University, Long Beach and illustrates how one organization uses IBM products. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described. IBM does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

IBM's provision of products or services does not constitute the provision of legal advice and IBM does not represent or warrant that its services or products will guarantee or assist your compliance with any law or regulation. You are solely responsible for identifying, interpreting, and ensuring your compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and rules relevant to your business and should seek competent legal advice as needed.