

EUNIS 2009: (wlp)[°] - the world lecture project

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Advanced learning technology is developing at a fast pace, but we are facing technical breaks among providers, platforms and users. This prevents an effective usage and management of the knowledge sources particularly of academic online videos by individual learning targets.

Though thousands of video lectures are available on the internet, there is no consolidating structure up to now that helps users to find the lectures that fit their interests. Moreover, the material is not widely usable for scientific or other professional purposes. Quite often, sources are not well defined, and there is a lack of online-instruments which allow the identification, the analysis and the evolution of the material. As a result, the highly valuable material is not at all as extensively exploited as it could be. It still does not form part of common practice in the scientific community, which should rely on its existence.

The world lecture project - (wlp)[°] addresses these problems by providing a comprehensive, overall solution towards a better access and usage of academic videos for both scientists and the general public by collecting all links to the videos and their metadata in one freely accessible database and providing specific instruments and tools to analyse and exploit scientific videos and their related learning objects.

2. THE WORLD LECTURE PROJECT

2.1. Addressed Problem

General public education, access to science, conjunction of knowledge and its utilization are major issues, in particular in Europe. Though the world wide web potentially provides the technical base for interdisciplinary and international knowledge-exchange, the academic web mainly consists of many single websites. As a result, academic online content is widely perceived within specialized circles and especially outside the scientific communities it is not common practice to rely on its existence. As a consequence, an efficient usage and management of the knowledge sources by individual learning targets is constrained and the highly valuable material is not at all as extensively exploited for practical purposes as it could be.

Those deficits also constrain an efficient usage of scientific videos: There are thousands of academic videos available in the World Wide Web. Their quality is improving and their number is constantly increasing. So we actually have a steadily broadening free accessible highly valuable knowledge resource. However, up to now, there is no adequate structure, that helps users to find the lectures, that they are interested in. It is impossible to get an overview over all these videos and it takes a lot of time and effort to find specific videos. In addition, access for the general public faces two specific limitations: language, as most of the available lectures are in English, and level, as general conferences and specialized seminars are usually intermingled. Cybnauts are reduced to trial-and-error approaches, a lengthy and discouraging process. The lack of a platform allowing a quick and efficient metasearch reveals the absence of a central depository for academic videos and of efficient mechanisms to annotate and search them.

2.2. (wlp)^o - Current State

The world lecture project - (wlp)^o is an online library for academic videos in any language and of any faculty from around the globe. The project collects all links to academic videos and their metadata in one freely accessible database. A search engine helps users to find the lecture of their choice easily. They can search lectures according to various criteria: theme, faculty, country, language and others. Each registered user can add new lectures. Thus the database is growing permanently. Additionally, users can edit the metadata of the lectures: they can complete the list of keywords, add links to additional material or adjust incorrect entries. An experimental pilot with more than 2300 videos is available at www.world-lecture-project.org.

2.3.(wlp)^o - Next Steps

To provide users with the opportunity of getting an overview of all videos available online, a search engine (webcrawler) will be developed to identify academic online videos and to harvest their metadata automatically. The webcrawler will also examine and test all data in the (wlp)^o database permanently. Besides uploading, embedding or linking content, users will be able to edit the metadata, indicate material with inappropriate content and an interactive interface for users will be developed to rate the material according to several criteria (e.g. excellence, usefulness, accessibility, entertainment). Ratings, comments, and notes - all user added content will be instrumental in developing multi-feature search engines and should ultimately allow users to navigate the library and to identify relevant content according to their level, interests and needs.

Additionally the project will develop a working platform that allows users to work directly online with the material. (wlp)^o will provide them with specific tools and instruments to search and analyse the videos in order to facilitate the evolution, the usage and the exploitation of the material for scientific and other professional purposes.

Moreover, the repository will be utilised as a starting point and basis for discussions - to mirror the collected knowledge from various perspectives, to generate new knowledge and to confront it with practical experience. (wlp)^o will provide a communication system that enables students, scientists and everyone interested to criticise and discuss the material, get in contact with each other and establish working groups, online courses and conferences.

The benefits of the project will not only be accessible at (wlp)^o: Through a new, flexible construction-kit-system, all elements of the website - the video search, video blogs, fora etc. - can be displayed on external websites as well. All elements will be synchronized and they may also be edited from external websites. This makes the Internet permeable and the content can be received and complemented in the context of various operational fields.

To implement (wlp)^o in a broad context, several universities and initiatives are already participating to accompany the project with their expertise and provide video lectures. They will also ensure high quality standards of the technology and the content, and translate (wlp)^o into key-languages to provide a multilingual platform.

2.4. Advantages

The world lecture project facilitates the access to knowledge for the general public worldwide and preserves a highly valuable knowledge resource. For students and scientists it is an excellent tool for scientific research. They can compare different opinions, diverse perspectives and comparative approaches concerning specific issues of various scientists from around the globe. It enhances the transparency of science activities and ties national and disciplinary advanced learning technology activities into an international and interdisciplinary network. As a result (wlp)^o improves scientific exchange and collaboration. As teaching skills can be compared across national, language and disciplinary boundaries, it allows successful methods and best practices to be identified, showcased and disseminated faster. Since (wlp)^o will be a multilingual and barrier-free supply the limitations caused by language and technical barriers will be opened and many more citizens around the globe can participate in the scientific discourse and develop cooperations.

As the project is developing day by day, we are open to helpful suggestions. The world lecture project is looking for partners worldwide, who would like to contribute to the project. Interested organisations are welcome to participate with their own ideas and initiatives.

An outline of the new design and the new functions we are planning, can be found at <http://wlp.relaunch.webxells.com/index.php?id=1>.