

MOODLE NOTIFICATIONS

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PAPER

THEMATIC AREA: Technical aspects

Abstract

Educational systems based on digital technologies are increasingly using *push* approaches to engage users and maintain active a two-way communication channel. In this paper we present a Moodle block that enables automatic notification to users of changes to the course they are subscribed. The type of notification is represented by a wide range of actions taken by the teacher. The notification is carried out by email, RSS or SMS, based on the student's choice.

Keywords - Push service, SMS, RSS, notification of updates in a course.

1 IDEA: PUSHING INFORMATION

In the field of systems for teaching and learning supported by digital technologies, a well-known phenomenon is the adoption of new and innovative technologies by imitation, which means without stressing the peculiar and richness of new modalities offered, but only reproducing the older way of operating. In the particular case of the LMS this approach means that they are adopted as a repository of content (files).

This is particularly limiting because nowadays almost all LMS allow learners and instructors to collaborate through forums and chat rooms, empower instructors to run class discussion, promote peer assessments, and enable students by offering the publication of their own notes and reflections.

Moodle works best when used for building understanding with and for others, according to the social constructionist philosophy that lies at the heart of Moodle design and development. According to this theory, learning is particularly effective when groups construct knowledge for one another. For this reason, Moodle has to be used for rich interaction between learners and instructors, instead of a simple repository of presentation slides and documents.

To this end, it is important to provide learners and instructors with effective tools that facilitate their interaction. Moodle is very often used as a way to deliver content to students (such as PDF files or SCORM packages) and to assess learning using assignments or quizzes. To actively participate to the class' activities, learners have to be informed whether new content has been posted into a Moodle course. Either the instructor has to inform their learners (by posting a message in the news forum) or the learner has to periodically log into the Moodle platform to see whether new content or activities have been inserted since the last visit.

2 NOTIFICATION OF MOODLE ACTIVITIES

In the current version of Moodle, notifications exist only in the Assignment module (notification emails are sent to the learners when the teacher provides a feedback) and in force-subscribed Forums (emails are sent out to subscribers on each message in the Forum). Forums and Glossaries moreover allow learners with an RSS aggregator program to be notified of new forum discussions or new entries in the glossary. No means are available to learners to be notified on new contents or activities in a course.

In order to facilitate the notification of new Moodle events, in this work we present the design and the implementation of a new freely available module for Moodle that works as a solution that periodically notify learners about new content or activities included into a Moodle course.

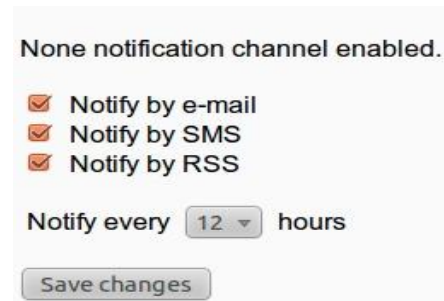
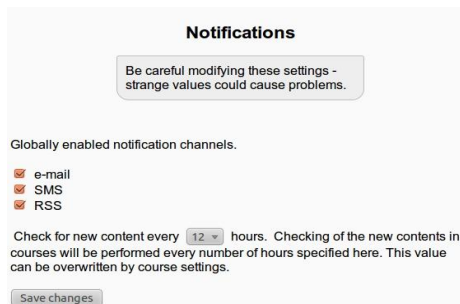
This solution acts as a sentinel that detects whether new contents or new activities have been included into the Moodle course, and notify the learner or the instructors about that. Notifications methods will be:

- a) e-mail message
- b) SMS message on mobile phone
- c) RSS aggregator



The user of the learning platform can choose which notification methods to use (one or more of the provided methods). The SMS message notification requires that the user insert a mobile phone number in the personal profile. The RSS aggregator is always available for any user, it doesn't require a specific configuration in the profile, the only requirement is a RSS reader software for receiving the news. For the email message, the mandatory address of the learner is used.

The software is implemented in two releases, that work for the versions 1.9.x and also for Moodle



version 2. [1]

This feature is available in the Moodle environment as an additional block that instructors can add to their courses. Any participant of the course can select the notification modality, and in case of e-mail and SMS, can decide the periodicity of notification (hourly, daily, weekly,...).

Riferimenti bibliografici

[1] <http://notifychanges.sourceforge.net>