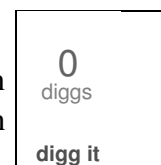Google™ Custom S   Search

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WeBWorK Ramps Up Online Homework Tool

by Dave Nagel

Open-source homework system WeBWorK is being ramped up for new multimedia capabilities and enhanced assessment functionality. Developers met earlier this month at an American Institute of Mathematics (AIM) workshop to help fine tune the software and plan for these enhanced capabilities, some of which are presently in the developer release. An interim update (2.4.1) was also released last week, adding various minor improvements and fixes.

WeBWorK is an open-source and free Internet-based system designed for math and science homework generation and dissemination. Funded in part by the National Science Foundation and supported by the American Institute of Mathematics, the software was developed originally at the University of Rochester by two mathematics professors. Its original scope covered only mathematics, but it's since been expanded (and continues to be expanded) to cover other subject areas as well, including physics, econ, chemistry, and others. It's now used in more than 100 institutions, ranging universities and high schools, and is also being deployed in some middle schools.

Some of the general features of WeBWorK include immediate feedback, automatic grading, access to a library of problems instructors can use in their homework, and customization of homework assignments. Some of the enhancements coming in the future as a result of the AIM workshop include:

- A new math and graphic objects language, designed to make it easier to incorporate graphics into problems;
- Support for Flash Video and animation, which allows for more interactive problems;
- Enhanced focus on pre-calculus and math for high school and middle school; and
- Expanded assessments to survey teachers and professors.

Some of these features are available in developer release or in prototype form but have not yet made their way into the latest stable release. We'll keep you up to date.

In the meantime, WeBWorK 2.4.1 was released Aug. 25, incorporating performance improvements, Library Browser enhancements, and general fixes. It's available now.

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About the author: David Nagel is the executive editor for 1105 Media's online education technology publications, including THE Journal *and* Campus Technology. *He can be reached at dnagel@1105media.com.*

Proposals for articles and tips for news stories, as well as questions and comments about this publication, should be submitted to David Nagel, executive editor, at dnagel@1105media.com.

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