Course Views Usage Patterns

January 2010

Background
Developed in 2008, The Library Course Views application (branded "Library Tools") dynamically generates student-centric views of library resources and tools for all courses taught at NCSU. Library content is contextualized to the course wherever possible by exploiting existing and new library resource mappings to NCSU course department codes or course numbers. Course Views provides a consolidated view of library offerings that is easily linked to from both library systems and non-library systems such as campus learning management systems.

Using visualization of Course Views use data from custom logs, this project examines both aggregate and semester-based patterns in usage of the Course Views application from Fall 2008 through Fall 2009.

Research Questions
• How has the usage of Course Views changes since the launch in Fall Semester 2008?
• How does Course Views usage fluctuate over the course of the semester?
• What are the most and least used curricula?
• What widget content is most useful to students?

Methodology
Usage data for the Course Views page is tracked through custom logging. The information in the log includes a timestamp (from which the date, time, and day can be gathered), whether the user accessed a course page or a widget, as well as which course and/or which widget was accessed. The visualizations were built using Google Visualization API. PHP was used to create the custom log and to prepare the log data for input into Google Visualization API.

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1 To view this report and interactive version of these visualizations online, see: http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/dli/projects/dataviz/viscourseviews.html
2 For more information, see: http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/dli/projects/courseviews/
Data Visualizations and Findings

Trends in Use over Time

Over the three semesters that it has been available (excluding Summer Sessions), Course Views has become increasingly popular, with a 39% increase in use from Fall 2008 to Spring 2009 and a 28% increase in use from Spring 2009 to Fall 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Course page requests</th>
<th>% increase*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2008</td>
<td>20,916</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
<td>28,996</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2009</td>
<td>37,009</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percent increase from previous semester
Use by Semester and Semester Week

Course Views receives the heaviest use in the beginning of the semester, which could be due to students downloading course reserves. Reserves are the most used features of the application, and 25% of all reserves accessed in Fall 2009 were in the first two weeks of the semester.

After an initial three weeks of high usage during the semester, there is a period of moderate usage for approximately eight weeks. There is a particularly sharp decline in use during Spring and Fall break (the 8th or 9th week of each semester). From there, usage decreases again until finals week, when it drops off dramatically.
Trends in Curricula Use

Humanities and social sciences curricula make up most of the Course Views usage, though this is skewed by the fact that the top three most used curricula make up over 36% of total usage. Out of the top ten curricula, half are in fact non-humanities curricula.

Customization and promotion of Course Views pages by subject librarians may play a significant role in the pages’ actual use. This prediction is based on usage patterns for some highly customized Chemical Engineering courses.

7% (11) of all 163 curricula accessed make up 59% of all Course Views use; the other 93% (152) of curricula represent 41% of use.

NOTE: Currently, enrollment data is not included in this metric. Because these numbers are not currently weighted based on how many students are enrolled in each curriculum’s courses, a curriculum with high relative usage may not be recognized. Work to correct this is in progress.

Trends in Course Use

Over the life of the Course Views project, pages for over 3,600 unique courses have been accessed.

The number of unique courses accessed via Course Views has increased by 45% (1,475 to 3,614) since the application’s release.

The number of courses accessed more than 100 times per semester has increased by 60% (43 to 69) since the application’s release.
Trends in Widget Use

Over a quarter of all widget use is for the Course Reserves widget. Recommended Content, Technology Lending and Article Search are also used heavily.

Half of the widgets available in Course Views are barely used, comprising only 11% of total widget use.

Widgets with high usage contain dynamic content (for example, Reserves, Recommended Content, and Article Search are all customized to the course or curriculum). On the other hand, widgets such as Citation Tools, Projects Tools, Contact Us are all static widgets. As a result, the product team is currently developing ideas for replacing these static widgets with more dynamic content.

NOTE: Use of the chat widget is logged separately and not included here at this time. The high use of the device widget is inflated by the slideshow-style display.