

Dare2BDigital

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PRESENTATION FORMAT

90 min. demonstration.

Requires Internet access, video projector onto screen, and ability to play audio from web site.

Demonstration will be done using presenters own laptop.

Dare2BDigital game engine will be demonstrated.

First season of Dare2BDigital in BC's public post secondary system will be demonstrated including challenges and student/audience responses to challenges.

CONTEXT, ORIGINS, AND PURPOSE

BCcampus (<http://www.bccampus.ca>) is a Ministry of Advanced Education initiative in the province of British Columbia (BC) Canada with a mandate to use Information, Communication Technologies (ICT's) to connect learners and educators to system wide post secondary education services.

In 2006 BCcampus conducted a survey across the entire BC post secondary education system seeking recommendations on how to promote and enhance educational technology use. Out of that survey came a strong recommendation for BCcampus to create a BC public post-secondary educational technology online showcase that highlights:

- Institutional or inter-institutional programs or courses representative of what is happening across BC public post-secondary institutions
- What really good educational technology supported courses/programs look like
- People who are using educational technology and their success stories
- Processes and methods of development and implementation, and
- The modeling of, and uses for, new technologies

As part of its response to this recommendation BCcampus developed Dare2BDigital (<http://event.dare2bdigital.ca>).

This recommendation is congruent with those coming from other initiatives. It is not enough to simply create online learning resources. The latest UNESCO report Open Education Resources – The Way Forward identifies awareness raising and promotion as the main priorities for promoting the advancement of the OER movement. (D'Antoni, 2007) Those involved with the National Science Digital Library initiative in the U.S. note that over the past five years of operation, they have heard a strong and consistent message from our community: "I don't want a list of resources; I want to understand how to use them." (Lagoze, 2006)

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

From the outset the awareness raising/showcase aspect of Dare2BDigital was designed and developed to be an online marketing and communication event. This is in line with conclusions from the Community Dimensions of Learning Object Repositories project where they note that examples of successful use should be collected and made available to users and should be web 2.0 enabled. (Margaryan, 2007)

Dare2BDigital deliberately set out to be Web 2.0 enabled and drew its development inspiration from both traditional and contemporary sources including:

- the long held tradition of the educational institution open house where the public and students are invited on campus to tour facilities, meet faculty, and see examples of courses and programs. Dare2BDigital is an online virtual open house for BC's public post secondary institutions
- student fascination and expertise with games. Dare2BDigital incorporates elements of game design and play including use of hosts, skill testing questions, prizes, and sponsors. Dare2BDigital was developed in conjunction with researchers from the Simulations and Advanced Gaming Environments (SAGE) research network <http://www.sageforlearning.ca>.
- reality television shows. Dare2BDigital transported reality television show ideas and format to the web including the aspect of teams taking on a challenge, judges scoring challenge responses, and audience voting for their favourite team
- web 2.0 and social networking. Dare2BDigital uses blogs, discussion forums, user profiles, and webcasts. These interactive and social technologies were chosen for their proven use in online learning and for their popularity with young students

A team of developers drew on all these ideas to design the concept for the Dare2BDigital event and to define a set of software requirements for the educational technology online showcase. These requirements were published publicly as a Request For Proposals (RFP). A local Vancouver company, the Donat Group, won the RFP and built the Dare2BDigital event engine using the open source software application Drupal.

DESCRIPTION AND FORMAT

Dare2BDigital: the Online Learning Challenge is a six-week event broadcast "live" over the Internet. BCcampus conducted the first pilot of Dare2BDigital as a live online event 1-Feb-2008 through 18-Mar-2008.

Each week teams of students compete in a weekly challenge featuring an online learning course from a BC public post secondary institution. The challenge showcases the course, the faculty who teach the course, and the institution where the course is available. The challenge put to teams requires them to engage and explore the course topic being showcased. Throughout the week teams interact directly with a web public audience discussing their challenge in blogs and forums and at the end of the week respond to the challenge by creating and submitting a digital media file that captures their experience. The digital media files teams produce in response to challenges are voted on by the audience and scored by a panel of judges with the best work winning prizes contributed by corporate sponsors.

The web based public audience is invited to explore the same course and resources as the teams. The audience can influence the way teams respond to challenges by posting comments to blogs and participating in discussion forums. Audience participants are invited to vote for the team challenge submission they like best at the end of each week. In addition to the team challenge the audience has their own audience challenge and, like teams, is invited to submit a digital media response to the audience challenge. Audience challenge submissions are judged by a panel of judges with the best work winning prizes contributed by corporate sponsors.

Prizes are a major motivating factor for team and audience participation. Weekly prizes are awarded to the best team and audience submissions to the challenge. Weekly team scores are aggregated over the six weeks with grand prizes being awarded at the end of the competition to the top teams.

Dare2BDigital follows a regular rhythm and schedule. Monday night at 8 pm the weeks challenge is launched using a live synchronous session (done using Elluminate). During this live session, to which the teams and public are invited, the faculty member showcases their course, sponsors are thanked, and the weeks challenge presented to teams and audience.

Weekly student team and audience challenge submissions are due the next Sunday night at 8:00 pm and are uploaded by teams and audience to the Dare2BDigital event site. Audience voting and judge scoring take place from Sunday night at 8 pm to Tuesday at noon with winners announced on the web site that afternoon.

PEOPLE

Dare2BDigital emphasizes social networking and interaction as much as showcasing content. Every effort was made to infuse the event with people to raise awareness of the people who are using educational technology and their success stories and how online learning is a social activity rather than autonomous, anonymous use of content. A short synopsis of the range of people involved in Dare2BDigital includes:

Faculty experts and instructional designers who agreed to have themselves and their course showcased and contributed to the design of the challenge.

Student teams who applied to be contestants and took on each weekly challenge agreeing to publicly show their work and interact with others. A total of twenty-four students participated as contestants. There were six teams from five different institutions with four students per team. Student participants had to be nineteen years of age or older and registered as a part-time or full-time student at a BC public post secondary institution. Teams were recruited by running ads in the campus newspapers of all post secondary institutions. Each team created a unique name for their team, a team profile and individual team member profiles. The six teams were:

1. League of Notions – University of Victoria
2. A-Team – University of British Columbia
3. Dattebayo – Simon Fraser University
4. Digital Pack – Thompson Rivers University
5. Global Voices – Kwantlen University College
6. United Students – Kwantlen University College

Public audience participants included students, teachers, family, friends, and any member of the public interested in online learning. Local, national and international audience participants of any age were welcomed. Over 3100 people made more than 8500 visits to Dare2BDigital from 58 countries around the world.

Nine judges were recruited to score team and audience challenge submissions. Judges included staff involved in developing online learning at public post secondary institutions, senior staff from e-learning private companies, game developers, and Ministry of Education staff. Judges were encouraged to be provocative and emulate judges from reality television shows in their comments and feedback.

Sponsors were recruited to provide prizes and to showcase their involvement with online learning. Every sponsor received their own area on the Dare2BDigital event site to promote and market their products and services. Close to \$40,000 worth of prizes were contributed from thirteen sponsors including:

- Apple Canada
- Adobe Software
- Radical Entertainment
- Elluminate
- Lambda Solutions

- BC Hydro
- WizIQ
- Sun Peaks Resort Skiing
- Prince of Whales – whale watching
- Saltspring Island Kayaking
- Hyak Wilderness Adventures – white water rafting
- Able Cresting
- Cherry Point Place Bed & Breakfast

Three people shared the Dare2BDigital Host role providing daily status updates, instructions, and commentary through the Host blog on the event site.

A Dare2BDigital technology and system administrator played a key role in supporting student teams with ensuring their digital media files were uploaded and easily viewable on the event site. Some functionality and configuration tweaks were required throughout the event and it was invaluable to have the support of the Donat group, the application developer as well as our own technology system administrator.

Public relations and marketing staff at all 25 public post secondary institutions were contacted by Dare2BDigital's marketing and communication staff to help with the promotion and marketing of Dare2BDigital on site. Each public post secondary institution received their own area on the Dare2BDigital event site to promote and market their online learning courses and services.

In addition to these publicly present people there were many people behind the scenes. During the design and development stage there were writers, game developers, programmers and marketing specialists. We also engaged one of the universities to assist with formal evaluation and research into the results and effectiveness of Dare2BDigital.

Many of the people who participated in Dare2BDigital did so as volunteers but a core paid team was essential. Having such a large number of people involved ensured Dare2BDigital was socially rich and made the event lively and interactive.

CHALLENGES

Dare2BDigital showcased course offerings at six institutions and their corresponding six faculty members. By providing team and audience challenges everyone could participate. The six challenges were:

Challenge #1: An Astronomical Experience

Team Challenge: Imagine what it must be like to freefall in outer space and invent a game or other type of recreation that could be done in freefall inside (or outside) a spacecraft. Describe your game or recreation activity in approximately 500 words and include a picture or image of your team or others having an 'astronomical' recreation experience!

Audience Challenge: Complete this sentence in 250 words or less - Deep Space Astronomy excites me because... Creativity, imagination, and spelling count!

Challenge #2: Dare2B You and Me

Team Challenge: Create a digital story to celebrate cultural identity. Story is to be approximately 5 minutes long, told in first person, illustrated with images, include music, be inspirational and motivational, have a message, impart cultural attitudes values and beliefs, and celebrate a cultural identity or collective identities.

Audience Challenge: Tell a digital story sharing a family tradition and celebrating family heritage.

Challenge 3: Making the Case for Justice

Team Challenge: Solve one of Canada's Great Unsolved Mysteries - Who Killed William Robinson? and submit your case for justice as a 5 min long Voice Thread presenting your argument to judge and jury.

Audience Challenge: Take a picture of something mysterious and submit it with a description, 250 words or less.

Challenge 4: Looking to the Land for Healing

Team Challenge: Create a narrated presentation describing the unique medicinal qualities of a BC medicinal plant and how it could be harvested.

Audience Challenge: Send us a testimonial (no more than 250 words) on a medicinal plant found in BC that you have used or plan to use.

Challenge 5: Our Energy Future

Team Challenge: Create a media presentation that outlines the environmental impact of developing alternative energy options on Vancouver Island.

Audience Challenge: Create a picture and description of an energy saving device that relies on your own personal power.

Challenge 6: Walk A Mile In My Shoes

Team Challenge: Using the Seven Principles of Universal Design and the Continuum of Functioning select an ability (vision, hearing, mobility, dexterity) and develop an activity that simulates the experience of fully or partially losing the ability.

Audience Challenge: Redesign something in your home, workplace or neighbourhood to be more universal. Put both the "before" and "after" images together in a digital file so they can be easily compared.

Challenges showcase the range of domains in which online learning is being used including science, sociology, history, botany, energy, and design.

CHALLENGE SUBMISSIONS & ASSESSMENT

Teams and audience members submitted responses to these challenges each week, uploading them to the Dare2BDigital event site. Judges and audience members publicly viewed and commented on team submissions.

A panel of three judges scored each team submissions out of 100. Seven different judges participated over the six week event. Judges were asked to assess each challenge based on Effectiveness – did the team produce a submission that convincingly responds to the challenge? Innovation and creativity – did the team produce a submission in the specified media format that is creative and innovative? Quality – is the submission high quality, accurate and supported? Entertainment value – is the submission fun and entertaining? Did you want to review it more than once? Engagement and participation - extent to which the team engaged registered audience participation and input into their activities through their team blog, via discussion forum, and other means. Each of these was equally weighted as 20% of the mark.

Judge scores accounted for only 80-85% of a teams challenge score. The other 20-25% was made up of audience voting. Each week registered audience members could vote for the one team challenge submission they liked best. An average of 202 votes were cast each challenge with over 1270 votes cast over the six weeks of Dare2BDigital.

The Dare2BDigital game engine automatically aggregates judge scores and audience votes into a single challenge score for each team, as a percentage out of 100. Three different teams won each of the first three challenges of Dare2BDigital.

Top submissions received weekly prizes. Winning entries were showcased each week. Scores are automatically averaged over challenges to create an aggregated overall standing score out of 100. The overall standings were displayed on a Leaderboard.

Some challenges were decided by a margin of 1% or less so audience voting played a significant factor. The overall lead changed several times and one of the teams that lagged far behind at first made a surge to come from behind and take third place overall at the end. Overall, the quality of team submissions was exceptional. See <http://event.dare2bdigital.ca/teams/works> for examples.

Winning audience challenge submissions were determined entirely by judge scoring done by two different judges. Audience submissions were simpler than team submissions but often equally engaging. See <http://event.dare2bdigital.ca/audience/works> for examples.

INTERACTION

Dare2BDigital emphasizes interaction, communication and social networking. Each team has their own blog and discussion forum. Every challenge has its own discussion forum. All participants can contribute to discussion and comment on blogs at any time. Over 380 posts were made to the discussion forums and hundreds and hundreds of comments were made. A site feed aggregated all discussion, comment, and blog posts to a continuous feed on the main page making the dialogue easy to track.

Interaction and dialogue created a dynamic site and a reason to return to it over and over again to keep up with, and participate in, the dialogue and interaction. Dare2BDigital generated over 8,800 site visits and more than 83,000 page views. Site activity took place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The busiest time of day was between 6 and 8 pm when the average time on site by each visitor was more than eleven and a half minutes long.

All teams eagerly anticipated judge comments on their challenge submissions and often commented back to judges. Favourite judges treated the assessment with levity and humour. Teams also looked at each other's challenge submissions and made constructive supportive comments. In addition to blogs, comments and discussion forums, live synchronous sessions were held each week that combined Voice-Over-IP (VOIP), webcams, whiteboard, instant messaging, presentations, and application sharing. A fun social networking aspect of the event was the ability for each participant to identify which team they were cheering for. The images of these "cheerleaders" displayed graphically on the team profiles in an area titled "Who's Rooting For Us".

DARE2BDIGITAL OUTCOME AND FUTURE PLANS

Dare2BDigital is the first of its kind. As an awareness raising educational technology showcase it blurs the relationship between educational, social, and recreational learning spaces and demonstrates how teaching and learning institutions can embrace those changes. Dare2BDigital is an online event/game engine enabling the entire post secondary system to have a virtual open house profiling the range of course offerings available and showcasing the creative talent of faculty and students. Dare2BDigital brings together students, faculty, institutions, vendors and the general public in a fun interactive event that promotes online learning and the use of educational technology.

Based on the success of this initial Dare2BDigital event future plans include repeat seasons of Dare2BDigital for BC's public post secondary system with new challenges and new teams each season. The K-12 sector in BC has also been excited by Dare2BDigital and plans are underway to do a K-12 Dare2BDigital either for the entire K-12 system, within school districts, or within individual schools. Preliminary discussions are underway exploring the use of Dare2BDigital to support other domains such as literacy and the 2010 winter Olympics taking place in Vancouver.

BCcampus is working to make the Dare2BDigital game engine available for others to use in such a way that it can be skinned and branded by others for their own use. If you are interested in exploring the use of Dare2BDigital for your own initiatives please contact Paul Stacey Director of Development at BCcampus by e-mail pstacey@bccampus.ca or by phone 604-412-7736.

REFERENCES

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