

SPIDER

spider.science.strath.ac.uk

SPIDER is a bespoke VLE delivering learning material, providing online support and departmental management tools to a wide sector of the university community.

This newsletter outlines recent innovations, updates and changes made to the system

More information on current SPIDER development is available via the "development diary" link on SPIDER-DEV at spider-dev.pharmacy.strath.ac.uk/

Feel free to email comments or suggestions about SPIDER or this newsletter.

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SPIDER cluster admins

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business
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Ian Thompson/ Tim Plumridge

physics
Ricky Martin

SPIDER newsletter Apr 2005

SPIDER-static?

April has seen very few changes on the SPIDER system. Numerous minor bug fixes were carried out, most of which will have gone un-noticed by the majority of users. A large proportion of effort has gone into ensuring the Radiation Records system is ready for its launch. Two training sessions were held for the 40 or so users who will be making use of the system from Tuesday 2nd May.

The has highlighted the issue of SPIDER training in general. There have been numerous changes and updates to the SPIDER system, but no major training sessions have been run since 2003. Polls indicate users find SPIDER easy to use, and adapt to the new tools quickly, but often users are unaware of all the features that the system provides. This being the case, training sessions will be organised for this summer (dates will be published on the SPIDER home page soon) to allow new users to get basic skills, and old hands to brush up and acquire expertise with all the latest tools and features.

Focus on...

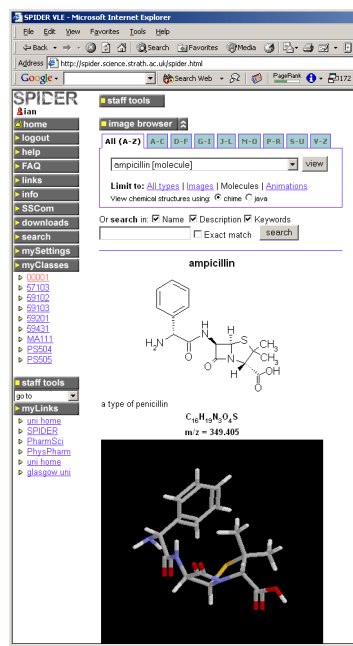
There haven't been any major updates to the core SPIDER system this month, so instead of the usual list of feature changes, this newsletter is going to be used to highlight some of the existing and planned features, and how they can be used to aid administration tasks as well as enrich teaching.

Image database

The image database on SPIDER is an open repository for images, chemical structures (CHIME), flash and director (shockwave) movies. Any staff user can access the files as well as contribute by adding new files to the database.

Each file in the database can be given a description and/ or keywords which are used in database searches. Its also possible to browse the database by starting letter of the image. There is currently a slight chemical/

pharmaceutical bias to the images in the database, as the majority of the files were created by Tim Plumridge to support his work on developing the MSc Pharmaceutical Analysis course, which will soon be launched as a distance learning course via SPIDER.



The screenshot shows the SPIDER VLE interface in Microsoft Internet Explorer. The address bar shows the URL <http://spider.science.strath.ac.uk/spider.html>. The page title is "SPIDER VLE - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The interface includes a navigation menu on the left with links for home, report, help, FAQ, links, info, SSCom, downloads, search, mySettings, and myClasses. The main content area shows a search for "ampicillin (molecule)". Below the search bar, there are options to limit the search to All types, Images, Molecules, or Animations. The search results show "ampicillin" with a chemical structure and a 3D ball-and-stick model. The 3D model is labeled "a type of penicillin" and shows the molecular formula $C_{16}H_{18}N_2O_4S$ and $m/z = 349.405$.

As all the images and animations in the database have been created by Strathclyde staff, you are free to use them in your own teaching materials (contact Tim for more information).

MyCounselees/ EWS

The myCounselees tool on SPIDER allows academic staff to quickly view important information about their student counselees. The tool lists each counselee and gives access to their assessment and exam results, and gives access to the students ePDP and email address. Staff can group their counselees under different labels (e.g. 1st Year, 2nd Year...) to help organise their own list. If SPIDER has been used to return exam results for the student's classes, the mean performance and number of absences/ MC and exemptions are shown. This acts as an "Early warning system" (EWS) as poorly performing or absentee students are highlighted in red, immediately indicating to the counsellor that the student may be

SPIDER Status

Page visits

April 2005: 1,026,083

Monthly 2005

January 1,109,057
February 1,012,323
March 1,110,545

Monthly 2004

January 670,745
February 700,745
March 921,142
April 702,324
May 638,881
June 167,310
July 124,638
August 167,754
September 285,340
October 1,325,512
November 1,701,827
December 1,194,879

Monthly 2003

July* 25,593
August 111,082
September 147,304
October 822,565
November 910,088
December 897,199

Busiest day

Dec 13th 2004: 95,221 visits

*SPIDER faculty went live mid-July 2003

Users

Total registered 8324
Staff 621
Students 7275
Alumni 428

Classes

Total: 488

per cluster

applied-phys 38
bioscience 143
business 21
CAS 7
chemeng 1
chemistry 49
computing 15
economics 28
maths-stams 56
pharmacy 49
physics 81

SPIDER uses Linux, Apache, MySQL and PHP aka "LAMP"

all code developed in house by Ian Thompson, Tim Plumridge, Ian Thurlbeck and Fraser Murray

struggling, and allowing the counsellor to take suitable action.

My Counsellees [help](#)

Reg #	Name	View	Options	Label
Year 1				
199154155	Luke Skywalker	exams mean: 20.3 Abs:MC: 1 Ex: 0		
199154156	Han Solo	exams mean: 59.5 Abs:MC: 0 Ex: 0		
Year 2				
199154151	Mohammed Ali	exams mean: 60.3 Abs:MC: 0 Ex: 0		
student	Test Student	exams mean: n/a Abs:MC: 0 Ex: 0		
199154141	Ian David Thompson	exams mean: 64.5 Abs:MC: 0 Ex: 0		
Year 4				
199154160	John Cleese	exams mean: 67.4 Abs:MC: 0 Ex: 0		
199154159	Terry Jones	exams mean: 63.5 Abs:MC: 0 Ex: 0		
199154161	Michael Palin	exams mean: 51.5 Abs:MC: 0 Ex: 0		

If departments encourage their staff to regularly check their myCounsellees, it would allow an "Early Warning" at any stage throughout the session, rather than simply after the student has failed the course. This highlights SPIDER's ability to assist with departmental administration, and the important role it could play in helping reduce drop out rates and boosting retention. SPIDER also has an "attendance register" tool, which could certainly be integrated with the EWS to improve the factors that are used to highlight "at risk" students.

User "info"

A large amount of data is held about each user on SPIDER from basic contact details through to a student's most recent quiz results. SPIDER's access privileges determine which information is visible on the "user info" page. Staff can click on the little "pawn" icons from most pages on SPIDER to quickly access that user's info page, with information ranging from the user's discussion "nickname", chosen "myClasses", last login time and who a student's counsellor is. Admin staff are

user

199154141 (ec98100)

Name: Mr Ian Thompson
Email: ian.thompson@strath.ac.uk
Email 2: ian.thompson@strath.ac.uk
Last login: 12/04/2005 12:08
Registered from: 22/07/2003
Status: Active
Cluster: Bioscience
Settings: [help](#) [info](#) [test](#)

News Filter:
y1, 00001, 23101, 23110, 23111, 57103, 59102, 59103, y2, 23120, 57301, 57302, 57303, 57304, 57305, 59301, 59302, y4, 00400, 23411, 23412, 23413, P5500, P5501, P5502, P5503, P5504, P5505, P5506, P5507, P5508, P5509, P 00201, 12240, 88205, 88206, 88210, 88211, stu, all, jpr

Discussion Filter:
general, postgraduate, alumni, for-sale, wanted, jobs, year2, 09201, 59223, 59224, B0214, SPIDER-Pharmacy

Nickname: [info](#) [test](#) [help](#)
Ian T

Chosen Classes

Code	Class name	On SPIDER class list?
23.101	Pharmaceutical Science and Drug Development	[pharmacy]
23.110	Personal Skills Development	[pharmacy]
23.111	Foundation Pharmacy	[pharmacy]
57.103	Biopharmacy I	[pharmacy]
57.104	Molecular Properties Of Pharmaceutical Materials	[pharmacy]
59.102	Physiology I	[pharmacy]
59.103	Physiology II (Life Support Systems)	[pharmacy]
BB.108	Bioscience I for Pharmacists	[bioscience]
BB.107	Bioscience II for Pharmacists	[bioscience]

Groups

Group	Name	Owner	Type	Clusters	Action
00001_group	superadmin	class (00001)	bioscience	view	
00000_ianStudent testgroup	199154141	person (00001)	pharmacy	view	
ian_student_test_01	199154141	person	pharmacy	view	
help	superadmin	person (00001)	bioscience	view	

Counsellor
Ian Mr Ian Thompson
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Telephone: +44(0)141 548 2969

able to access further details such as the users news and discussion filters and to check the user's page visit statistics.

Student users can access staff contact details in the same way from each class home page, news postings, or from a user search. This lists staff email, room and telephone numbers, as well as showing which classes they teach on. Unlike staff, students can't view other students "info". Why not see what information you are able to access using this powerful but simple tool?

New Clusters

The Faculty of Education intend to use SPIDER to support online questionnaires for the PGDE (Primary) course. Staff from the Educational & Professional Studies and Childhood & Primary Studies departments will be piloting the system starting in May. A successful pilot would mean around 30 classes being represented on the system.

A successful meeting at the end of April with the Dean of the Faculty of Law, Arts and Social Sciences, a number of departmental representatives and Nicola Harrison (Learning Services – IT Training) resulted in a decision to use SPIDER to provide undergraduate SPDP for the next academic session. This will be delivered as part of their Faculty's ITASS course for all new students.

Both faculties will initially be using a single cluster for their administration of SPIDER.

ePDP update

The ePDP is scheduled for a number of upgrades over the summer, many of which have been user driven, such as customisation of the "personal skills" and extending support to postgraduate students. This is in addition to proposed changes which will be integral to the School of Pharmacy's involvement in the SHEFC funded Re-engineering e-Assessment Project directed by Dr. David Nicol in the Centre for Academic Practice.

In development

As always, anyone wishing to suggest new features or any other improvements to SPIDER, just contact us at spider-vl@strath.ac.uk