

# **SPIDER Newsletter**



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#### SPIDER

http://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 newsletter Apr/May 06

# April-May 2006

# The SPIDEEs 2005-06

The last 3 weeks have seen a flurry of activity on SPIDER as students and staff nominate and vote on who receive the coveted Virtual SPIDER awards (the SPI-DEEs). This year two new categories were introduced - the SPIDEE genius award for the user making the most valuable academic contributions to the discussions and the best nickname SPIDEE for the user voted to have the most clever or amusing nickname. The only award not nominated and voted for by the users are the staff and student Babel awards, given to the most prolific discussion poster over the academic session. The system logs are checked to determine who earned these awards.



This years Best Avatar award went to ĐÛRnîÇüs - The Dark Destroyer, for a light hearted animated alphabet. BB102 took the Best Class award, its variety of class materials, web resources, assignments and lively discussion forum making it a winner with the voters. Dr. John Liggat just pipped Dr. Val Ferro for the Best Staff User award, his frequent mailings and news postings winning him praise from the student body. The Best Nickname award went to the surreal 'one by one the penguins steal my sanity' and the Jester award for the most humorous poster was awarded to Captain Circle-Jack, who kept us entertained throughout the session with tales of pirates, the SPIDER dance, bizarre competitions, surreal story making and the oddity that is the "My Birthday" thread.

The Babel awards were retained by last years winners - Madskull and Val Ferro out-posting all other users vet again. Madskull was also awarded the Golden SPI-DEE for valuable contributions to the SPIDER environment - his input of a mixture of light hearted and informative postings in many of the discussions won over the voters. The winner of the new SPIDEE Genius award was Benjamin MPharm for his frequent and well constructed posts on topics as varied as computers, immunology, pharmacy and even Martian physiology. Well done all the winners, and better luck next year for those that came so close.

#### Group update

The class and departmental groups have been updated to include sub-groups and the interface to man-

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age these aspects have been streamlined. In addition, each group home page now has a clearer layout

## Updates & New Features Groups

The groups tool has had a facelift and a few under the bonnet improvements. The layout of the group home page has been improved to define the various tools (discussion, chat, "info" [file share]) more clearly, and to give easy access to a new feature - sub-groups. Class and department groups can now have sub-groups groups within groups, which have their own discussion, chat and info areas. You can even create sub-groups of subgroups. Only group owners and members of the sub-group can access these.

The standard group creation tool has also been updated so that when creating class groups, the groups can be generated alphabetically, reverse alphabetically or at random from the class list.

## News email copy (again...)

In the last SPIDER newsletter we reported on an update to the news tool that autosent a copy of class news to staff with any email copied to the class list. A number of

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SPIDER St Page visits	atus
May 2006 April 2006	1,125,300 949,394
<i>Monthly 2006</i> January February March	1,185,389 1,132,823 1,359,610
Monthly 2005 January February March April May June July August September October November December	1,109,057 1,012,323 1,110,545 1,026,083 1,028,573 280,072 169,710 202,628 486,100 1,455,483 1,641,738 1,016,651
Monthly 2004 January February March April May June July August September October November December	670,745 700,745 921,142 702,324 638,881 167,310 124,638 167,754 285,340 1,325,512 1,701,827 1,194,879
Monthly 2003 July* August September October November December	25,593 111,082 147,304 822,565 910,088 897,199
Busiest day Dec 13 <sup>th</sup> 2004: 99 *SPIDER went live mid-Ju	5,221 visits <i>Ily 2003</i>
Users Total registered Staff Students Alumni	12,640 814 11,023 803
Classes Total: 762 applied-phys bioscience business CAS chemeng chemistry computing economics education LASS maths-stams pharmacy* physics SCA	32 144 26 15 2 94 17 30 60 2 79 65 94 102
*includes 8 duplicat	te IMU classes
SPIDER uses Linux, A and PHP aka "LAMP". oped in house by lan Plumridge, lan Thurlb Murray	Thompson, Tim

users requested this to be removed, as not all messages are relevant to staff, so we've changed the set-up. Copying emails to staff is now an option - just untick the box if you don't want staff associated with the class to get an email copy of the news sent to students.

#### **Discussion changes & bug fixes**

A couple of minor fixes to the discussions have been made. The "new in" section, listing which boards have had new posts in them, was mis-reporting - some threads without new posts were being listed. This is now working correctly. A



number of users reported double entries in their discussion filter, which has also been fixed. The "general" discussion

board has

The 'new in' lists discussions with new postings

been changed so that all users post to the same board. This allows users to have cross cluster discussions. Year boards remain cluster specific.

#### Quiz questions

SPIDER quiz questions can be imported/ exported using SPIDER's own format (an extended version of the IMS QTI XML format). The guiz guestion uploading tool has had a minor addition - you can now optionally assign a category/ filter when

Delete Quiz: Applied-phys		<ul> <li>DELETE</li> </ul>
OR		
Copy Quiz: Applied-phys		▼ Copy
Manage Quiz Questions		
Delete multiple questions	go	
Export Quiz Questions: Cor	nplex Numbers Class Test 1	• Expo
a Load question file:	Browse then load	
Category/filter:		-
a load BlackBoard/ CourseComp	ass questions	
a load WebCT guestions		

filter option you upload a question bank which will replace any existing category applied to

the questions. More improvements are planned for the management of questions and guizzes, time allowing.

#### Focus on....

The Focus on... Section is a regular monthly feature used to highlight some of SPIDER's many tools. This month...

## Class lists

ses

Murra

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Each class on SPIDER has a class list, containing the students who are in the class for the current academic session. Class editor and admin level users can

populate this list in two ways - by "pulling" data directly from a "view" of the Registry Oracle database, or using manual input within SPIDER. This latter option can be a cut/paste operation or users can actually add students by keying in their details directly.

Registration N	ame	Email		Action		List Data
4				ost	delete	List Data
8			2004	80	delete	Registered: 120
8			2004	odt	delete	Uniregistered: 0 Total: 120
4			COM	est	delete	
8			2001	sto	delete	<ul> <li>View list</li> </ul>
4			-	size	delete	-
8			2001	est	delete	Add users
e			2001	ste	delete	> Add individual to list
2			2000	size	delete	Reg.#
0 8			2004	80	delete	Name
1 8				ste	delete	Sumarne:
2 8			2004	est	delete	Emat
3 8			2004	ste	delete	add
4 8			0.000	site	delete	
5 <b>A</b>			2004	est	delete	add several students
6 8			2004	ste	delete	
7 8			0.000	oit	delete	MyClasses
8 8			2001	est	delete	▶ add
9 8			2004	edt	delete	Add this class to each of the
0 8			2001	68	delete	student's 'myClasses'
1 8				c.H	delete	

Class editors and admins manage class lists using a combination of manual entry (above) or by pulling registry data directly (below)

SPIDE	help () Info 💋 tools 🚱 classes 🛞 comms
Add Class	List from Registry
Select the class	code and academic session, then click "pull data" to pull the data from registry into the SPIDER class list
Class Code:	59103
Session:	2005-2006
List will be:	merged 💌
	merged = contrine data with current (ist with autor) resident = residen current (ist with autor) data
pull data	

The staff view of the class list indicates whether the entry has come from registry or via SPIDER. All staff can view and export class lists on their cluster. Student users are able to see if they are on a class list - shown on each class home page by a tick (or cross if they aren't on

d	Code	Name	Class on SPIDER?	On SPIDER list?	
	31101		a de la companya de l	#	
	40103	-	x	#	
	40136	-	#	<b>#</b>	
	53101	Introduction to Statistics	4	1	
		Making it Count: Data Presentation and Communication	4	4	
	MA101	Mathematics 1A	V	4	
	MA102	Mathematics 2A	V	1	
₽	MA103	I.T. Skills and Mathematical Software	V	*	
		Introduction to Mechanics	4	4	

Students can check they are on SPIDER class lists and add themselves if they should be listed

the list). If a student isn't appearing on the class list, but they are appearing on the registry list (student view in PEGA-SUS), then they can use the "check you are on class lists" option on their my-Classes page to auto-add themselves to any class list they should be on.

# In Development

A new student information system for departmental administration, additions to the ePDP, pharmacy Rx tutor, peer assignment marking, plus others...

Want to suggest new features/ improvements to SPIDER, or to submit anything for publication in the newsletter? Just contact us at:

e: spider-vle@strath.ac.uk t: x2969