

THE BELLE PROJECT

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New national standard to enhance use of multimedia for education

CALGARY – Searching text using keywords may be straightforward, but searching multimedia is another story.

Imagine trying to find multimedia materials that show the concept of gravity - perhaps a video clip on tides, an animation of Galileo's gravitational experiments, or a physics lesson aimed at a certain age group. Imagine wading through hours of video or multimedia on the web, especially if you are seeking materials for educational uses, where quality and relevance really matters? People searching for educational resources using traditional online methods find the process time-consuming and ineffective.

Today, in an effort to enhance the sharing and use of online educational objects, a national protocol is being released to provide a standard for describing all multimedia educational "objects." The protocol has been developed by a national education technology consortium.

"This will revolutionize the use of educational technologies across Canada," explains consortium leader Rory McGreal of TeleEducation, New Brunswick. "Digital learning resources can be shared and re-used across the country, rather than simply remaining hidden within the digital infrastructure of the institution or instructor who created them. Canadian educators and students will have simple, intuitive access to resources developed and maintained across the country and throughout the world."

Standard descriptions, known as metadata, give students, researchers and educators the ability to search for and use objects from any online repository of educational objects, regardless of where it is located. These educational or learning objects can be as simple as individual web pages, video clips, or interactive presentations, or as comprehensive as full lessons, courses or training programs.

The standard, known as the Canadian Core Learning Resource Metadata Specification (CanCore), has been developed by national and provincial educators and technology developers, including project participants of Portal for Online Objects for Learning (POOL) and Broadband Enabled Lifelong Learning Environment (BELLE). Coordination and development work was carried out by the Campus Alberta Repository of Educational Objects (CAREO). Funding and support has been provided by Industry Canada/CANARIE, LearnCanada, Alberta Learning, Netera Alliance, TeleCampus.edu, and the Electronic Text Centre at the University of New Brunswick.

The national protocol has been under intensive development since November 2000. It is compatible with existing metadata standards, to allow seamless searches of other repositories located in Canada and around the world, such as the US-based MERLOT project (Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching).

For more information: CanCore standard <http://www.careo.org/cancore>

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