

Student Portal 2.0 (iGoogle)

Ken Ingle
CPCC Web Services

Outline

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Project Overview

A new student portal will be released in order to provide greater communications and customization capabilities for students online. This portal will be leveraging the technology and expertise provided by Google via the iGoogle / personal start page interface. The new portal will focus on providing a long-term engagement opportunity with students that allows for full customization of both content and tools available through the portal. CPCC will also be provided with an outreach opportunity both while the user is a student and long after they have left the institution.

Utilizing the iGoogle portal solution will allow the CPCC development team to focus on providing more robust "Gadgets" and tools while off-loading the maintenance of the portal infrastructure to Google. The transfer of system management will allow for more rapid development of "Gadgets" as well as better integration of "Gadgets" with other college systems.

What is a Portal

Portal is a term, generally synonymous with *gateway*, for a World Wide Web site that is or proposes to be a major starting site for users when they get connected to the Web or that users tend to visit as an anchor site. There are general portals and specialized or niche portals. Some major general portals include Yahoo, Excite, Google, CNET, Microsoft Network, and America Online's AOL.com.

- Craig Nowlin, Gerry Bliss - Whatis.com

Portal History at CPCC

The current portal used at CPCC utilizes the uPortal product. uPortal is an open source portal used by a number of higher-education institutions throughout the country and overseen by the Java open source JASIG group. uPortal is implemented in Java on a server housed within CPCC.

When the current portal was released a decision was made to remove the capability for the student to customize the portal to their needs. The user was forced to view only content and information provided by CPCC and did not have any option to add or adjust internal content or to add any external content and tools.

The decision to remove customization capabilities coupled with the current aging of the uPortal solution has dramatically reduced the use of the system. A student focus group showed that a large portion of CPCC students use the MyCPCC box on the cpcc.edu homepage as opposed to the student portal.

Coupled with the limited usage of the current portal solution is the maintenance overhead involved in managing the uPortal solution. uPortal requires a dedicated server environment and management of that environment, web server, portal application and all related "channels" (similar to Google's Gadgets). This creates a staffing and time burden within the Web Services group. These factors contribute to higher overhead and maintenance costs within the Web Services Team.

General Strategic Plan

CPCC serves a wide variety of students from various backgrounds with a wide range of technical skills. Moving forward the portal will focus on providing customizable services that provide the student with the power to adjust their experience and tailor information to their needs. By removing the management requirements associated with maintaining a physical server and in-house portal, the college will be able to realize a dramatic cost savings and service benefit. This benefit is provided as a result of a shift in focus from maintaining a monolithic portal infrastructure to providing services and content. This change allows for a more rapid response to the ever-changing needs of the college and student population.

Effort is focused on providing integration with other products including Google Calendar, Docs, Spreadsheets, the CPCC Intranet, the CPCC website, and Google Sites. The long-term goal is for all Gadgets to be cross site compatible (e.g. MySpace, Facebook, Yahoo). This approach will allow users to utilize the portal while attending CPCC and after completing their time at the College. By creating this cross-platform engagement the College will have the opportunity to maintain a relationship with the student beyond their time at the institution.

College Gadgets

All "Gadgets" constructed for the portal will utilize the CAS single sign-on system to allow for seamless integration with the portal solution and other online services provided by the College. Utilizing CAS will remove the requirement for a student to log-in with every Gadget on their page.

Initially all Gadgets created for the portal will be a duplication of the existing "channels" available in the previous student portal (uPortal). It is important to provide a consistent

user experience and expectation for services provided online. The initial Gadgets include:

- **MyCourses** - This Gadget provides the student with information on the courses they are enrolled within for the current semester. Information available from this gadget includes: a link to the syllabus for the course, a link to the instructor information, a link to the online instance of the course and a new feature which allows the student to add the course schedule to their Google Calendar provided with their email account (refer to the **StudentCourses Channel Creation** document).
- **Email** - This Gadget provides a window into the student's email, showing the five most recent messages and any new messages that have been delivered.
- **CPCC News** - This Gadget replaces the existing news feed provided within uPortal. This will give the college an opportunity to communicate directly with the student via the college content management system.
- **Library and Student Life** - Gadgets will be available to provide more information about the events and offerings of student life and the Library. These Gadgets will also provide personalized information about the student's activities and Library services.

Moving forward Gadgets will be created to further integrate the services offered by CPCC (refer to the **StudentCourses Channel Creation** document). For example: A Gadget could be created to allow students to update their print management system balance directly from the portal without the need to go to the application and re-authenticate. In another proposed Gadget a student could view their telecourses online via the portal. There are many Gadgets which could be constructed to provide faster and easier access to college services for existing students. Web Services will also begin the process of surveying students (with the help of established college research resources) on the tools they feel would benefit their daily work the most. Web Services will also engage college administration and instruction to better determine what tools can have the most positive impact on student performance at the college (both in class and out of class).

All applications being developed by the Web Services group will now include a step to determine if there is justification to build a Gadget to complement the service being offered to the student. Removing the maintenance requirement of the portal infrastructure and leveraging the external development community (which includes other college's) will allow CPCC to provide a more seamless and robust online user experience.

External Gadgets

The power of a portal is in a users ability to customize the portal to their needs. The primary shortcoming of the previous portal was that users were not able to customize any portion of the content. CPCC does not have the resources or desire to provide every tool a user would want outside of what is needed to meet College objectives. iGoogle has a tremendous amount of community developed applications as well as Google developed applications. Students will have the ability to add any Google Gadget which is publicly available on the web.

As a starting point the college will provide the following external / Google provided Gadgets to the students:

- **Calendar** - This Gadget will provide students with information about their personal calendar as well as any other calendar's they have subscribed to (e.g. MyCourses).
- **Docs** - This Gadget will provide a user with a listing of the Google Docs they have created through their college account.

- Task List - This Gadget allows a student to maintain a personal task list.
- Weather - This Gadget provides local weather information and is customizable to the student's location.
- gTalk - This Gadget allows a student to talk with other students and friends online.

New Gadgets and tools are developed by the community on a regular basis and some provide a great value and benefit to both the student and the college.

Design Concepts

The design of the portal is an integral component to the long-term usability of the portal by students. It is important to combine the strength of the Google brand (as well as look and feel) with the internal brand of the college.

Image

Simple imagery was chosen to compliment the CPCC brand yet not compete with the functionality of the Google application. Too many **attractive** elements on the same page view that appeal to the eye and draw the user's attention become distracting. Focus was given to the approach Google has taken with their public offering of the iGoogle system to encourage users to continue use of the portal after they have completed their time with CPCC.

Color

A stylish white background gives a cool, neutral, soft base backdrop for the content. The design is allowed to guide the user through the site. The user's eye needs space to clearly and cleanly identify things. Strong colors and tonal contrast are used to draw the user to the more important elements on the page. It is important for the colors to tie the user back to CPCC while at the same time not alienating the user from the popular Google experience.

Layout

Research for Web 2.0 design has revealed that front and center layout feels more simple, bold and honest. Designs are more economical with pixels and content. There's no need to cram as much information as possible above the waterline/fold. Using less to say more is much more user friendly. The layout also provides a space which is not editable by the student. All content on the page is movable and re-movable by the student with exception to the far left column. This column is dictated by the college and is not adjustable by the student. This column provides the college a way to guarantee that certain information is delivered to the portal. It is important that no more than four items appear in the column as to not frustrate the student with excessive scrolling. The power of a portal is the users ability to customize their experience, if the college begins to over-dictate the content no added value will be provided.

iGoogle Public Layout Examples:

The top section of the iGoogle homepage features the 'iGoogle' logo in a colorful, bubbly font. Below the logo is a large white search bar with a magnifying glass icon on the right. To the right of the search bar are links for 'Advanced Search', 'Search Preferences', and 'Language Tools'. Below the search bar are two buttons: 'Google Search' and 'I'm Feeling Lucky'. A message box says 'To rearrange your page, drag and drop the title bars.' Below this is a cartoon illustration of a park scene with a trash can, a person on a bench, a person walking a dog, a person with a stroller, and a bear. At the bottom of this section are 'Home' and 'Add a tab' buttons on the left, and 'New! Select theme | Add stuff' on the right.

Google News

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By Johanna Neuman, Los Angeles Times Staff
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- ⊕ [McCain denies special treatment for lobbyist](#)
- ⊕ [Strong quake rocks Nevada](#)
- ⊕ [Pentagon claims direct hit on toxic satellite](#)

Weather

Charlotte, NC

37°F
Clear
Wind: E at 7 mph
Humidity: 60%

Today | Fri | Sat | Sun

42° | 34° | 40° | 39° | 54° | 37° | 53° | 35°

Google Calendar

February 2008

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8

[Quick Add](#) [Create Event](#) [Show Agenda](#)

How to of the Day

- ⊕ [How to Remember Dreams](#)
- ⊕ [How to Not Be Annoying](#)

Select a Theme For This Tab

Google | **Classic**

- [Winter Village](#)
- [Beach](#)
- [Aja Tiger](#)
- [Solar System](#)
- [Hong Kong](#)
- [Tea House](#)

[Save](#) [Cancel](#)

Date & Time

Thu FEB 21

3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10 11 12 13 14 15 16
17 18 19 20 21 22 23
24 25 26 27 28 29

YouTube Videos

Advanced Search
Search Preferences
Language Tools

Google Search | I'm Feeling Lucky

To rearrange your page, drag and drop the title bars.

Home Add a tab New! [Select theme](#) | [Add stuff](#) ▸

Google News Menu

Top Stories | U.S. | World | Entertainment | Sci/Tech | +

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US Navy handout via AP By THOM SHANKER
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TOLEDO, Ohio (Reuters) - Republican presidential front-runner Jo... [all 793 news articles](#)

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By Rick Pearson and John McCormick | TRIBUNE
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- [McCain denies special treatment for lobbyist](#)
- [Strong quake rocks Nevada](#)
- [Pentagon claims direct hit on toxic satellite](#)

Weather Menu

[Charlotte, NC](#)

37°F
Clear
Wind: E at 7 mph
Humidity: 60%

Today | Fri | Sat | Sun

42° | 34° | 40° | 39° | 54° | 37° | 53° | 35°

Google Calendar Menu

February 2008

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	1
3	3	4	5	6	7	8

[Quick Add](#) [Create Event](#) [Show Agenda](#) ▾

How to of the Day Menu

- [How to Remember Dreams](#)
- [How to Not Be Annoying](#)

Select a Theme For This Tab

Classic

Winter Village

Beach

Aja Tiger

Solar System

Hong Kong

Tea House

[Save](#) [Cancel](#)

Date & Time Menu

Thu FEB 21

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	

YouTube Videos Menu

Recently Featured Page: 1 2 3

CPCC Proposed Layout:



akgb76ad@email.cccc.edu | [Sign out](#)

[Web](#) [Images](#) [Video](#) [News](#) [Maps](#) [more »](#)

[Advanced Search](#) [Search Preferences](#) [Language Tools](#)

Powered by **Google**

[Add stuff »](#)

My Courses

remind me with [Google Calendar](#)

Syllabus	Meets	Instructor
ECO 251 83	ON LIN	Eric Taylor
	GI 11 01:30 PM MWF	
PHY 252 01	GI 42 12:30 PM TH	Peqram Lebabady
	OC 30 06:00 PM T TH	
MAT 272 10	OC 30 07:30 PM T TH	Mark Ellis

To-Do List

New Item:

- high Write an btml PyQuery implementation
- med *foo
- low Post no. 1, and no.2 PyQuery things
- low Refactor the models of ProjectRequest to be yet more general
- low Use Elbir in ProjectRequest

Weather

[Charlotte, NC](#)

39°F

Mostly Cloudy

Wind: NE at 12 mph

Humidity: 55%

Today: 43° | 34°

Fri: 40° | 40°

Sat: 55° | 37°

Sun: 54° | 36°

Google Docs

[Sign in](#) to your Google Docs account.

Sticky Note

Click in the cool sticky note to edit it.

Upcoming CPCC Events

- [\(2/21/2008\) Harper Student Resources Day](#)
- [\(2/21/2008\) Central Ya-Ya African Dance and Drum Ensemble](#)
- [\(2/21/2008\) Harris Campus Black History Month Program](#)
- [\(2/21/2008\) Harper Student Resources Day](#)
- [\(2/24/2008\) Service in Action- Epic International](#)

Dictionary.com Word of the Day

[relocate](#): to assign or remove, usually to an inferior position.

Calendar

February 2008

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23

Quotes of the Day

Why do you have to be a nonconformist like everybody else?
- [James Thurber](#)

Implementation Plan

Web Services would like to roll out the new portal in three stages over the next six months. This roll-out schedule would allow for adequate user testing as well as ease the transition to a new service for students. Completing the migration during the summer would also minimize the impact on the student's course activities.

Stage 1: Dual service availability - Currently available

In the first stage of release iGoogle would be made available to students via the "Start Page" link at the top of their student email and uPortal would still be accessible. A link would be placed within uPortal to provide students access to the new system for preview and adjustment purposes. During this time a student survey would also be available online to collect feedback on the new portal and ideas for additional tools.

Stage 2: iGoogle becomes the default portal - May 19, 2008

In this stage iGoogle would become the default start page for any user entering the portal and a link would be provided for the user to utilize uPortal if they chose to. The start page when a user enters their email account would also change to iGoogle. Adjustment based on the student feedback would have been completed at this point.

Stage 3: iGoogle is fully released and uPortal is deprecated - August 1, 2008

In this final stage iGoogle becomes the only portal available for students at the college and uPortal is shutdown.