Abstract - Nowadays information concentration is one of the most cruel ways of exclusion in the world. People who don’t have information access are more and more away from the modern world. And not only information is important but also knowledge and how to use and profit from this knowledge.

This paper presents the Poli Para Todos program that is opening and offering, for free, all the content of undergraduate courses of Escola Politécnica da Universidade de São Paulo.

Index Terms - social responsibility, publishing tool, open content.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays information concentration is one of the most perverse ways of exclusion in the world. People who don’t have information access are more and more away from the modern world. And not only information is important but also knowledge and how to use and profit from this knowledge.

By perceiving this process and associating it to the Brazilian reality, Escola Politécnica da Universidade de São Paulo decided to open and offer, for free on the Web, all the content of its undergraduate courses.

This program is called “Poli Para Todos” (that means “Poli for All”). Escola Politécnica’s main goal is to be Social Responsible toward the community and to continue being a reference in Engineering Education in Brazil. We also realized that we should do in Brazil an experience equivalent to MIT Machassusets Institute of Technology’s experience [11] in the USA, but offering to our society engineering programs and courses with Brazilian characteristics and realities.

Based on our latest experiences in Distance Learning programs, the Laboratory of Computer Architecture and Networks – LARC developed a tool to help professors who want to join the program but don’t have time or don’t know exactly how to convert their material to the appropriate format and to publish them on the Web. This tool is called EPT – Easy Publishing Tool.

A professor who wants to join the “Poli Para Todos” Program only needs to inform where the content s/he wants to publish is. This content can be in any format as: PowerPoint slides, word archives, HTML, Flash, JPG, MP3, Wav, MPEG, AVI and even transparency sheets that only need to be scanned. Users only have to signalize where their archives are and how they are linked. EPT will publish them automatically, in a predefined format by Escola Politécnica.

Along with Poli Para Todos program we have here at Escola Politécnica a big Distance Learning Program. The school has made many efforts to create a modern and advanced infrastructure to provide distance courses like: we developed our Learning Management System – COL [1],[4],[5],[9],[10] and we developed a tool to create and publish automatically multimedia contents [12], [13], [14], [15].We have also the Polivirtual program [2],[3],[6],[7],[8], with an infrastructure composed of 4 main sites, with modern rooms, based on a high speed network – the Internet 2, to provide simultaneous videoconferences that are used in distance courses.

One of the biggest challenges of our program is to stimulate professors to join it. Many of them have a big resistance to deal with digital didactical contents as they think it’s very difficult and it takes a long time to construct a good and attractive material to be published.

After we started the “Poli Para Todos” program we realized that a big consequence of the development of our tool is that it helps a lot our distance learning program. This happens to facilitate enormously the process of production of Web content, that can easily be added to COL, as we are working and producing all the didactical content in an open format.

The objectives of this paper are to present the tool we developed to help the Poli Para Todos Program and also to present previous results of the program.

In the first section we will present the Poli Para Todos project main objectives and purposes, in the second section we will present a software tool we developed to help professors to join the project, in the third section we will present the results we have had so far and the results we expect to have in the next 6 months, in the fourth section we will present copyright concerns and in the last section we will present some conclusions and the next steps.
THE PROJECT

According to its principles of Social Responsibility toward the society, Escola Politécnica launches this important initiative, opening the didactic material of its regular disciplines for everyone who is interested in knowledge and in better practices of engineering, in its most diverse areas of specialization.

With its 10 semester courses and 3 four-month courses offered to a contingent of 4,524 graduate students, 16 graduate courses with 4,044 students and 222 specialization courses with over 7,770 students, Escola Politécnica extends its reach even more through the knowledge of engineering connected to the **Poli Para Todos** program.

The work of its 495 teachers will be taken to the Web, allowing all interested in teaching and learning engineering the opportunity to assimilate such contents. This way, it will also allow the spread of school’s quality pattern in teaching and learning in this knowledge area.

The **Poli Para Todos** program, through this Web Portal, will centralize the distribution of didactic material in the most diverse areas of engineering.

Regularly, the user will find news related to already released material and being accessed by the community.

There is a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) list in the Portal, containing the most important information proceeding from the users’ questions to clarify and keep the Portal working. E-mails directed to the Web Portal or to the teachers will not necessarily be answered individually.

Because of the great number of e-mails that will probably flow, they will be selected, grouped according to similarities and answered by a supporting staff, and the ones with common interest ones will be added to the FAQ list.

THE EPT TOOL – EASY PUBLISHING TOOL

The **Poli Para Todos** Program is an optional program at Universidade de São Paulo and professors aren’t obliged to open their courses.

To facilitate the process of publishing their didactic content and consequently, stimulate professors to join the program, we developed the tool **EPT – Easy Publishing Tool**.

EPT provides an easy way to publish any kind of document in any format as: PowerPoint slides, word archives, texts archives, HTML, Flash, JPG, MP3, WAV, MPEG, AVI and even transparencies sheets that only must be scanned. Providing all these possibilities we tried to encourage all professors, even those who still have their material in printed formats.

The main reason to develop this tool was to facilitate the work for those professors who aren’t familiar with Web based technologies.

As this resistance is the main obstacle for our Distance Learning program too, we are trying to make all the process as easy as possible to professors. We imagine that, if professors can construct their material in an easy way, they will be much more motivated in creating and publishing their material in this format and also, this fact will diminish their resistance to Distance Learning programs.

Another reason to develop EPT Tool was to provide a cheap way to offer our content. It’s very expensive to create and support a complete hardware infrastructure and a team with specialized people to create and publish the didactical content. As this is a long-term project, if we don’t provide professors with some tools to be independent in publishing their courses, we will not have enough budget to maintain the project.

The EPT tool is available to all professors and it can be downloaded at the Portal we developed for the project.

When a user enters the EPT environment, as shown in Figure 1, the tool provides the option to create or search and Figure 2 obliged files – Objectives – Program – References and the content. These 4 files will be present in all courses at the Portal as we created an Identity to the project. This identity will appear not only with these files but also because EPT introduces a water mark on every page of the courses – Figure 3, **Poli Para Todos** identification – a GIF. This is done because as any person or institution is allowed to use this material we want to give the credit to Escola Politecnica and to the author of the content.

As we can see in Figure 3, there is a frame at the top of the page with the symbol of **Poli Para Todos**. This frame is put automatically by EPT and appears on all pages of the Portal.
All courses we're offering in this program will be published and hosted at the *Poli Para Todos* Portal – figure 3. This Portal is based on a SQL Database where all the courses will be stored. All interfaces of the Portal are JAVA programmed to search and show courses contents. The Portal has identification and security features implemented because only Escola Politécnica professors can publish courses in the Portal.

Whenever a professor wants to publish a course, first it is necessary to identify the professor’s content before uploading it in the Portal. After identified, there is an upload function that searches the content and uploads it in the SQL Database.

As the Portal is for all the departments of Escola Politécnica, the first operation is to choose the department – Figure 4 and then create or choose the course, depending if it’s the first time the professor is doing the upload, as shown Figure 5.

After having created a new course, the professor indicates where the content (EPT tool creates a .zip file with all the courses files) is and uploads it. After this, the course is shown at *Poli Para Todos* – Figure 6 and 7 with its water mark.
COPYRIGHT CONCERNS

The Escola Politécnica da Universidade de São Paulo allows copy, distribution and use of the available contents in Poli Para Todos Program, by means of the recognition of authorship and subsequent credit to the Escola Politécnica and to the author.

The didactic contents available in this portal cannot be copied and used for commercial purposes, with exception of contents previously authorized by its authors.

This Portal uses a Free content license based on a GNU License for free content.

CONCLUSIONS

The Poli Para Todos program was inaugurated on March 11th and until now we have 10 courses published. Our goal is to have about 100 courses in one year and we expect that other courses from other schools of Universidade de São Paulo will join the program.

We are conscious that our big challenge now is to convince all professors to join the program because there is a big resistance to open their course. Meanwhile we realize that this program is a big step to our distance Learning Program because when a professor publishes his/her course in this Portal, s/he realizes that this is the first step to create a distance course. We’re convinced that if we can have about 100 courses in one year, we’ll also have many new distance courses in the same period.

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