



Facebooking class work

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Bangladesh has nearly one million Facebook account holders -- a sixth of all internet users, according to Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission. Initially college and university students were the main users. But now people from different age-groups are increasingly using it. At the same time, researchers, scholars and teachers are thinking of how this tool can be used in academic purposes. Teachers can utilise Facebook in the classroom for engaging students in a manner that might not be entirely possible in traditional classroom settings. Different researchers are talking about ways to replace blackboard with a Facebook-Google Docs combination and looking at ways to connect academic writing, learning and communication to larger context via Facebook groups.

It was an ordinary morning in the teachers' lounge of Dhaka University. I and my colleague Dr SM Zayed Ahmed were talking about Facebook, as the previous day, he had submitted his tutorial marks on his Facebook profile. Just a few days later, I saw different comments on the Facebook wall posted by the students of his group. I had some articles on Social Networking Tools (SNTs) published in some national and international journals. The focus of these articles was using SNT in libraries and academic purposes. But I never dared to apply this technology in my classroom. However, all things were in my favour. We had all the logistic support in our classroom like projector, laptop, internet connection, well decorated classroom and overall student enthusiasm. I started a formal discussion with graduate



Anwar communicates and keeps his students updated through his facebook group page and also uses it as a teaching tool.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

students on the first day of their classes and explained the process. In graduate level, I taught a course titled "Internet Studies and Web Design". Earlier, I had started a Facebook group for my students. I primarily used the forums wall to announce upcoming events and for Current Awareness Services (CAS). That is why for me, in graduate class it was not a new experience. I asked my graduate students how many of them were on Facebook (almost 90 percent) and how many used it weekly (95 percent). This ratio made me more impatient and I created a profile on Facebook named 'Masters'

ISLM Summer'. I created a limited profile with controlled settings, no photos, videos, status update and so on. The profile is only for the graduate students of Information Science & Library Management who are the number of 35 and their academic session is 2008-2009. The admin panel is maintained by me as only graduate students are permitted to be a member of this group. On the first day of their classes, I explained how we will proceed. In the class, after presenting my lecture, a Q and A session starts. After ending each class, I submit the class lecture on Facebook wall notes so that stu-

dents who are members can collect the lectures accordingly in their convenient time. Besides these, I often submit different links of electronic journals and articles related to the courses. Sometimes I answer questions from students posted on the wall. As a result the discussing session on a topic continues until it is clear to the students. I also uploaded the current syllabus of my course and declare the class schedule accordingly. Students who used Facebook to find new people or catch up with old friends are now using it for academic purposes. One participant said: "Now I use Facebook to

see what's available on my subject, join different learning groups such as climate change, drug abuse and spend time in learning sites." When I asked about whether anything negative had happened to them as a result of their Facebook use, interview respondents describe spending too much time on the site, or becoming preoccupied with one's profile and online self-presentation.

I can't say that I fully run my course on Facebook, but I have gone to using it as my means of communication with students. Many students don't read e-mails anymore, but they can't wait to see what has been posted on their wall. So if someone misses a class, I drop them a note saying, "Hey missed you in class today, everything ok?" In case of a missing assignment, I will drop them a message instead of posting it on the wall. In fact, most of the graduate students don't mail or call me anymore because they get me on Facebook.

This report is a finding from graduate students of a small department in Dhaka University. It is unreasonable to confidently generalise this result to users with different demographic or cultural contexts. Gradually different universities, libraries and organisations are now creating Facebook profiles to keep in touch with their users. Bangladeshi institutions are not far behind and I think this feature will trigger more research into using Facebook in classroom to meet the academic purposes in Bangladesh.

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e-Content and ICT4D award

Ananda Multimedia tops 'learning and education'

ADIL MAHMOOD

How many people do actually know about the developers of facebook, apart from its public face and co-founder Mark Zuckerberg? The number won't be many.

But these are the people who actually play the vital role in development of ICT based services as their views and ideas set the motion of a project or website, they are the 'unsung heroes'.

32 organisations were bestowed with the award in 14 categories for developing information and communication technology, in the first national competition of its kind in Bangladesh.

The Ministry of Science and ICT in collaboration with D.Net (Development Research Network) organised the National e-Content and ICT for Development Award 2010.

This week, winner of the 'e-learning and education' category, Rangamati-based Ananda Multimedia, awarded for interactive multilingual multimedia education software of national curriculum textbooks for classes I-II, comes under our spotlight.

This project is an interactive multimedia version of the textbook of National Curriculum Text Book (NCTB) for indigenous pupils of Class I and II.

Mohammed Omar Faruk, chief executive of Ananda Multimedia told The Daily Star that the software is available in three indigenous languages--Chakma, Marma and Tripura.

He said as languages of the hill tracts community are different from the other parts of the country, the young indigenous children have to face initial difficulties just after getting admission into the primary schools.

As a result, though a good number of children get admitted into the school, the rate of school attendance decreases gradually, Faruk added.

A talented group of indigenous artists and animators has worked together for character design and graphics of animation of the software.

"Generally children like animated graphics, texts and sound more than still pictures and still graphics of the books. That's why the software was developed to enrich the learners' memory effectively, fruitfully and delightfully by its extra ordinary characteristics like presentation of the subject continuously, alternately, orderly", said Faruk.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board provided the financial supports to the project that facilitated developing the indigenous languages.

Many children got back to school bench after making this product available in many schools of the indigenous territory, Faruk claimed.

Hats off to Ananda for their initiative.

Kaspersky 2011 product line unveiled

IT, TELECOM REPORT

Kaspersky Lab, one of the global leaders in security solution software, on Sunday introduced its 2011 edition of the home user products to Bangladesh's ICT business community at a gala ceremony in city's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

Faruk Khan, commerce minister graced the occasion as the chief guest. M Zabitov, charge d' affairs of Embassy of the Russian Federation in Bangladesh was present as the special guest, while Suk Ling Gun, managing director of Kaspersky Lab, South Asia was the keynote speaker.

Styled 'Towards a Safe Digital Bangladesh', the event envisioned Kaspersky Lab's participation in the safety of a 'Digital Bangladesh'.

The commerce minister in his speech praised the effectiveness of Kaspersky security software in Bangladesh and greeted its distributor Officextracts for popularising the concept of using legal software in the local market.

Kaspersky Internet Security 2011 and Kaspersky Anti-Virus 2011 will provide real-time proactive protection constantly monitoring the system to detect any type of potential threats and prevent any destructive activity.

With Kaspersky Lab's new products, users have everything they need to stay safe and secure while they surf the internet. The solutions provide reliable isolation of untrusted internet resources, giving the user full reassurance that their digital environment is



clean, safe and free from digital threats and unwanted intrusion.

The newly-implemented System Watcher technology monitors all system events in full creation and modification of files, system calls and changes to the system registry.

The new solutions incorporate reputation rating services. That means information about a known object is received in real-time without the need for it to be scanned locally. The information is sourced from Kaspersky Lab's databases that are constantly updated by the Company's experts.

Both products include improved proactive protection from new, as yet unknown threats based on scanning for typical threat symptoms. Importantly, all the main modules are updateable, which means that should completely new types of threats emerge, the products' features can be updated without having to reinstall the solution from scratch.

Kaspersky Internet Security 2011 contains a significantly improved Parental Control module that restricts a child's access to social networking sites, instant messaging (ICQ, MSN) and specific programs on the computer. It can also control the downloading of files and the transfer of personal data.

According to market statistics, Kaspersky is the fourth popular brand name in the world and most popular household name in Bangladesh in anti-virus market.

Kaspersky Lab and Officextracts jointly hosted the launching event.



AP, New Jersey

The most ancient traditions of Islam are going high-tech, with a slew of modern offerings for those observing the holy month of Ramadan, which begins this week.

Cell phone applications such as "iPray" or "iQuran" offer a beeping reminder of requisite prayer times, while the "Find

Mecca" and "mosque finder" programs help the Muslim traveler in an unfamiliar city find the nearest place to pray.

"When I saw these applications for the first time, I thought: this is amazing," said James Otun, who has several Islamic applications on his Apple iPhone and iPad. "Whoever came up with this idea: God bless him or her."

The applications aren't just for Ramadan; there are Islamic-themed programs that help users find the nearest Costco offering foods prepared according to Islamic dietary rules, learn the correct Arabic pronunciations in a daily prayer, or count how many pages of the Quran they've read that day all on a mobile phone.

There also are applications, or apps, for the holy books of several other religions, from the Catholic Holy Bible to the Bhagavad Gita, a sacred Hindu scripture. The first time Sumeyye Kalyoncu heard the Adhan or call to prayer through surround-sound speakers on her iPhone dock, she was overcome with nostalgia for her native Turkey. Such applications are especially popular in the U.S., Kalyoncu said, as U.S. mosques do not broadcast daily calls to prayer from external loudspeakers, as they do in Muslim countries.

"These are traditions and these have been in our lives for ages, like almost 15 centuries, so they seem very old," Kalyoncu said. "I think this is like combining together the technology and the things that we do daily."

Kalyoncu uses an iPhone app called

Observing Ramadan? There's an app for that

iPray Lite, keeping track of requisite daily prayers with a program that simulates the clicking sound of prayer beads or the turning wheel of a handheld metal counter Muslims use to keep count of prayer repetitions. Using headphones, the 24-year-old says she can now fulfill her daily spiritual obligations by counting prayers on her iPhone on the commuter bus to Manhattan from her Edgewater home.

Apple spokeswoman Trudy Muller said the company doesn't track the more than 225,000 apps for its iPhones by category so she doesn't know how many are Islamic-themed. The programs aren't just offered by Apple; Nokia has a Ramadan suite for its cell phones that consolidates everything worshippers need to know to observe Islam's holiest month, in which Muslims worldwide observe daily daylight fasting.

Some apps are free. Those that are not generally range from about 99 cents to \$2.99, although some are more expensive.

The dates of Ramadan still are determined by the lunar calendar, and calculations can differ among Islamic communities around the world.

But Islam never has been at odds with innovation, said Zinnur Tabakci, who runs an Islamic religious book and gift shop in Paterson, N.J.

"Islam is not against technology. Now you can do it easier, faster," said Tabakci, who recently supplemented the strings of traditional prayer beads and religious texts he sells with a wall of mobile phone accessories to keep up with demand.



TECHPHOTO

Telenoid R1

An elderly man (L) communicates with his granddaughter (in background, on computer) via the new humanoid robot called "Telenoid R1" (C), shaped like a child and composed of minimal human features such as a head, a face and upper body, developed by Osaka University's professor Hiroshi Ishiguro in Osaka, western Japan on August 1. The tele-operated android Telenoid has nine "actuators" in the small body with enables it to be remote-controlled by sending voice and movement commands, captured with a camera.

PHOTO: AFP

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