

MedCAT: An Internet / Intranet solution for the archival and distribution of media resources

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The last decade has seen radical improvements in communications technologies, brought about by advances in optical fibres and transmission systems. Such advances, together with changes in computer hardware and software technologies have stimulated the growth of large scale computer networks. However, the most significant growth has been in the expansion and accessibility of the Internet primarily due to the development of the World Wide Web (WWW). This growth has spawned entirely new industries in electronic publication and media distribution and management.

These changes, together with the increasing emphasis on quality of education and efficient university teaching have paved the way for the development of sophisticated electronic communication systems for the administration, management and delivery of education into the 21st century. Many institutions have already invested significant resources into the infrastructure to support this environment. Academics are also changing the way information is communicated and are increasingly focusing on the electronic delivery using Computer Aided Instruction via CD-ROM and the Internet. This increasing move to electronic communication has highlighted several problems in the distribution and management of information. A significant problem we have faced at the University of Melbourne is the gradual attrition of valuable slide collections from retiring staff. In order to protect the intellectual property and archives within the University we have built an electronic repository of media resources which can be shared across the University. This archive facilitates the sharing and management of electronic resources across the University. Specifically developed for the Faculty of Medicine this system consists of several thousand images from all aspects of medicine. This rapidly growing resource facilitates the interaction of University departments and maximises the value of this ever expanding resource.