4-1-2013

Creation of a Natural History Information Database with Mobile Device Access for the Pace Campus in Pleasantville

Joshua J. Schwartz
Dyson College of Arts and Sciences, Pace University

Martina Blackwood
Dyson College of Arts and Sciences, Pace University

Recommended Citation

INTERIM REPORT

Creation of a Natural History Information Database with Mobile Device Access for the Pace Campus in Pleasantville

Cornerstone III

Co-Principal Investigators:

Joshua J. Schwartz, Ph.D., Dyson College

Martina Blackwood, DPS, Instructional Technology, Dyson College

6-1-2013

Original Goals

Our main goal is to develop a system that will permit individuals on campus to easily gain information about the species of plants, animals and natural areas on Pace's Pleasantville campus. By scanning a QR code on small sign posts near items of interest using their mobile devices, individuals will access relevant websites. A Twitter account will enable students and faculty to inform others via "tweets" of noteworthy species (e.g. bird) sightings on campus. An important goal of the project is to enlist the assistance of Pace students in implementing the system. After we started our project, we expanded our original goals to include the development of a website.

Progress to Date

The items listed below (for Spring 2013) supplement information provided in our final progress report of 2012.

1. We have expanded, and continue to expand, our online database for plant and animal species on the campus.
2. We have taken additional photographs of species.
3. We have successfully incorporated audio clips of animals on some species web pages.
4. We have made a significant number of species signs with QR tags and placed them at locations around the PLV campus.
5. To further publicize NaturesPace, Schwartz:
 (a) Wrote an article that appeared in the Pace Pulse.
 (b) Gave a short talk (on April 24) about NaturesPace to the students and faculty during a meeting of Pace's Vox group. As a result of previous discussions with Dr. Deborah Poe (Eng. Dept.), the spring issue of Vox (Pace's Arts & Literary Magazine) was devoted to nature.
 (c) Gave a presentation at Pace on NaturesPace for Earth Month.
 (d) Gave a presentation on NaturesPace at Yale University.

6. We have added features to our NaturesPace website, including links to related programs at Pace, and a link to the spring 2013 Nature issue of Vox. Examples of student art, poetry and prose have been uploaded to our website. Additional and improved instructions for contributing to NaturesPace have been uploaded to our website.

7. We began working on (and successfully tested a "bare bones" version of) an online nature tour of campus.

8. We have hired a student to assist with the following:
 Develop online (and also mobile device accessible) tour of ecologically significant campus sites.
 Develop GPS capability for web page access.
 Upgrade the sophistication and aesthetics of website.

Impacts - Students

In addition to the many students that became involved the first year of the project (2012), during the first semester of 2013 students (4) in Schwartz's general biology class (Bio 102) used Twitter to notify NaturesPace followers about nature on campus and one student did a painting. Another undergraduate and a graduate student in the Environmental Sciences program (ENS 625) created species web pages. Many students (24) contributed art, poetry and / or prose to the Spring 2013 Nature Issue of Vox to which we have linked on our website. The NaturesPace project was instrumental in the selection of the theme for this issue of the magazine.

Impacts – Faculty

In 2013, Deborah Poe and Cara Cea have assisted by involving their students (see above) in the project.

Next Steps

During the summer and fall of 2013, with the help of our employed undergraduate student assistant, we will incorporate additional information, as needed, into the species pages that have been created. We will also increase their number. This student and the PIs will photograph species and assemble and erect more species signs on campus. We will also develop the capability for an online (and mobile device accessible) tour of ecologically significant campus sites as well as an on campus nature tour (using GPS supplied coordinates). We expect to upgrade the sophistication and aesthetics of website.

During the fall semester, we hope to involve more Pace students – especially those in Schwartz's ecology class and students in art and English. .