

**SACUBO 2004 Best Practices  
Registration and Online Bookstore Integration**

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## ***Abstract***

*With enrollments steadily increasing, the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) is constantly striving to streamline the delivery of services. In April 2001, the DCCCD entered into a contract with Follett Higher Education Group for delivery of bookstore services. This partnership includes providing an Internet based ordering system allowing students to purchase textbooks through eFollett.com, and providing integration between DCCCD's web-based registration process (eConnect) and eFollett.com.*

*In November 2001, the DCCCD implemented an online bookstore for each of the DCCCD's seven colleges enabling purchases from any DCCCD eFollett.com bookstore for classes held at any of the colleges. Students may choose to pick up their textbooks at one of the bookstores or have them shipped.*

*In July 2002, the DCCCD implemented seamless integration between eConnect and the online bookstores. Students' shopping carts are automatically populated with textbooks for all credit courses (at all colleges) for which they are registered. This greatly simplifies the online purchase process and eliminates errors in students purchasing textbooks for courses in which they are not enrolled.*

*Students no longer have to drive to one of our colleges and stand in line to purchase textbooks, and they have more information available online as they consider course options.*

## **Introduction of the Organization**

The Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) was created in 1965 in an effort to provide Dallas County citizens access to quality education that is convenient and affordable. The DCCCD is made up of seven colleges located throughout Dallas County and is the largest institution of higher education in the state of Texas. In addition to the colleges, the DCCCD also operates the Bill Priest Institute and the R. Jan LeCroy Center for Educational Telecommunications. The Bill Priest Institute serves individuals and businesses of all sizes with training programs customized to meet their needs. The LeCroy Center is one of the largest producers of distance education products in the nation. The DCCCD enrolls over 100,000 credit and non-credit students each semester.

The DCCCD offers two-year associate degree plans, continuing education programs, workforce development, adult literacy and other basic skills programs. The DCCCD's mission is to prepare students for successful living and responsible citizenship in a rapidly changing local, national and world community. This is accomplished by providing accessible, accredited, affordable, cost-effective and quality learning opportunities for development of intellectual skills, job skills, personal growth, and/or transfer to a baccalaureate program. In fulfilling this purpose, the DCCCD expands cultural, economic, and workforce development in the communities it serves. In all of its efforts, the DCCCD strives to exceed the expectations of the community and its citizens.

**Statement (restatement) of the Problem/Initiative**

The goal of the online bookstore/registration initiative was to provide students convenient access to the bookstores' textbook databases during the registration process. This enhanced service provides a vehicle whereby students can register for classes online and purchase textbooks immediately after completing the registration process and before exiting the registration system. The objective of integrating online book sales with the DCCCD registration process was to enable each customer to purchase textbooks online without having to access each course/section independently through the bookstore web sites. Students' shopping carts are automatically populated with textbook information based on registration data.

## **Design**

The design phase required coordination between the DCCCD's information technology department and the bookstore vendor to determine the look and functionality of all DCCCD bookstore sites. This included determining the colors and logos that would be used at each of the bookstore web sites, how to distinguish minimesters (short terms inside a long term), and how information would be presented to the students. It was necessary to implement policies that ensure consistent quality of service for students enrolled at all DCCCD campuses so that a student enrolled at one campus can easily purchase textbooks at other campus sites.

DCCCD webmasters at all college locations were engaged to provide links to the new bookstore web sites in order to ensure a similar presence on each campus web site and the centralized DCCCD web site.

## **Implementation**

### *Planning*

Implementation included developing a detailed project plan with timelines to track all aspects of the project from establishing the online bookstore to integrating it with the online registration process. It was important to determine the effectiveness of the integration before bringing the bookstore sites online. Changes to the bookstore implementation were made to accommodate the needs of the integration.

### *Customization*

The DCCCD worked closely with eFollett to determine what information should be transferred electronically from DCCCD to eFollett in order for eFollett to know what classes a student was taking and which books they needed without compromising the security of the student's information.

The bookstore web sites were customized to reflect policy decisions and the look and feel of the web site at each campus. The DCCCD provided logos and colors for each site. The DCCCD and eFollett worked together to determine consistent policies with regard to returns, buy-backs and delivery schedules.

### *Testing*

After specifications and customizations were completed, test semesters were uploaded to the bookstore web sites, and DCCCD and eFollett worked to ensure that students' needs were met. After all parties were satisfied with the functionality, live data was uploaded to the bookstore web sites and verified for accuracy and completeness.

### *Bookstores Go Live*

The online bookstores were made available to the public in November 2001. Links were placed on campus web sites linking to their specific campus bookstore. Links were placed on the centralized district web site linking to all bookstores. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) were developed to help the student find and navigate the bookstore sites.

### *Integration with Online Registration*

The DCCCD created design mock-ups to confirm the look and feel for the integration.

The process for student access to the online system was as follows:

1. Log in to DCCCD's student services system.
2. Select the "Buy My Books Online" link.
3. Select a term.
4. Select a campus bookstore.
5. At this point students were linked to the eFollett site with their class schedule encoded in the URL. (These URLs are generated dynamically based on the student's schedule and at which store they chose to shop. No information other than the classes was electronically transferred).
6. Option to remove from their shopping list any books they chose not to purchase.
7. Proceed to check out including payment options and delivery methods.

Necessary programming was completed and tested to carry out the process as designed.

This program was extensively tested across many class courses/sections and store locations. During this time additional customer relations management (CRM) wrappers were developed for the integration including FAQs, onscreen instructions and help desk training.

### *Integration Goes Live*

Upon the successful completion of the testing, the bookstore integration was made available to the students in July 2002. Promotional information was placed on campus and district web sites, and access continues to be tracked. The process and the CRM wrapper are periodically updated to ensure a satisfactory online experience for the students.

## **Benefits**

Since implementation of the online service in July 2002, online sales attributed to the integration program exceeded \$ 235,000.00. This represents approximately 35% of total online textbook sales during this period. Registration integration sales for July and August 2003 increased by 52 % over the same period in 2002. It is projected that the sales ratio for Registration and Bookstore Integration will increase significantly in the long term; it is anticipated that sales from Registration and Bookstore Integration will reach 50 % of total online textbook sales within the coming year and 80 % of total online sales within the next four years. This is indicative of some improvement in textbook market share and translates into increased commissions to the DCCCD. The timeliness of access to the textbook databases, automatic population of students' shopping carts and convenience to the students during the registration process are accomplishments that support the initiative to enhance service.

In addition to the customer service benefits, the registration integration initiative identified opportunities for improvement in the timely submission of textbook information to the bookstores. Less than optimal performance in the submission of textbook requisitions provided the rationale for a recommendation to conduct an in-depth analysis of textbook information flow in order to identify weaknesses in the process and effect improvements.

## **Retrospect**

Greater emphasis should have been placed on the timeliness and accuracy of textbook adoptions prior to implementing the Registration and Online Bookstore Integration program. Providing timely textbook information to the bookstores is critical to the overall success of the initiative. Improvements will continue in order to enhance customer service, maximize online textbook sales and improve the textbook adoption process.