

UNB's Single Site Service Source

Kim Washburn
University of New Brunswick
PO Box 4400
Fredericton, NB Canada E3B 5A3
(506) 451-6862
washburn@unb.ca

Janice El-Bayoumi
University of New Brunswick
PO Box 4400
Fredericton, NB Canada E3B 5A3
(506) 453-3551
jgb@unb.ca

ABSTRACT

Integrated Technology Services (ITS) Departments at the University of New Brunswick (UNB) coordinate technology support for the UNB bi-campus (Fredericton and Saint John) community. This service includes a help desk web site. The first Computing Help Desk web site was released early in 1998 on the Fredericton campus. It was clear that the new site provided valuable service as visits to the site tripled over the first three years. Yet despite the services it provided, the web site had some shortcoming. The most serious of these was lack of inclusion in the site of the smaller of UNBs' two main campuses, the Saint John campus. A number of problems and new services had also been requested as possible site improvements. It was time for a site redesign – to turn the Help Desk web site into a true “Single Site Service Source” for both campuses providing services required by both customers and Help Desk personnel.

In June of 2001 a bi-campus team consisting of a programmer, web designer, Fredericton campus publications manager and Help Desk managers from both campuses joined together. Although the primary objective was provided a single help site for both campuses, additional goals included: a new improved look, enhanced functionality, improved ease of use, services for student consultants, more content, production of service statistics and a clearly defined responsibility for site maintenance.

What seemed to be a simple project expected to last a couple of months, ended up being more complex than expected and took closer to 6 months. A few months after the new site was released its deficiencies were noticed. A new team was formed, to implement more “renovations”, kind of sounds like “Bob Vila and This Old Site”. The final site has been well accepted, and site visits continue to grow.

Categories & Subject Descriptors

H.5.2 [User Interfaces]: Training, Help, Documentation

General Terms: Design, Documentation and Human Factors

Keywords: Help Desk, Helpdesk, Web, Support, Service

1. INTRODUCTION

UNB has adopted a mixed strategy for providing technology services to its faculty, staff, students and guests. The larger campus, located in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada provides some central services for the entire university. These include, among

many, student email, access to commercial and off campus research networks, and administrative services. Other technology services are campus specific. For example both the Saint John and Fredericton campuses run their own LAN as well as file and print sharing service. Each campus has its own Integrated Technology Services department with its own reporting structure. The Fredericton campus offered an independent help desk web service, while Saint John help desk web services were limited in scope and incorporated into the regular ITS web site. A new ITS help desk web site was envisioned to provide a single site for the UNB community to go for updates and assistance on technology issues – a Single Source Service Site.

2. GOALS FOR THE NEW SITE

A team with members from both campuses was formed. The timing on the team formation was critical to the project's success. Although an integrated help desk site had been proposed several times, it was never accepted. Staff turnover provided the opportunity to revive the idea, which was then able to move forward with all parties interested in a successful outcome. The site attempted to address a number of issues identified with the existing Fredericton site, provide service improvements as well as satisfy bi-campus requirements. The goals were as follows:

- Provide service for both campuses.
- Review current site for friendliness and usability, and implement identified improvements.
- Provide a single, secure resource page for help desk specific utilities.
- Provide a single, secure resource page for student consultant specific utilities.
- Provide a method of tracking availability of multisystem services (such as email).
- Design a bold new look.
- Use the integrated site as a tool to improve inter-campus relations.

3. PROVIDE SERVICE FOR BOTH CAMPUSES.

Most services provided specifically on the Fredericton campus were already identified. Services that were Saint John campus specific were added. All services were clearly identified as to which campus they affected or if they affected all UNB. An example of this is the page announcing system outages. Campus designations are now displayed along with the outage message. Help Desk hours, as well as the services expectations are provided and identified by campus.

In addition, utilities or functionality, which was previously available only to the Fredericton campus, due to access restrictions, was made available to authorized persons on each campus.

UNB ITS Help Desk
 Fredericton @ Other: (506) 453-5199 / helpdesk@unb.ca
 Saint John: (506) 648-5555 / helpdesk@unb.ca

Self Serve :: Location & Hours :: Our Services :: F.A.Q. :: Student Consultants :: Request Assistance
 We have locations in Saint John and Fredericton, NB Canada.

Location and Hours (Times are GMT -04:00 Atlantic Time)

Fredericton	Saint John
In Fredericton, the ITS Help Desk is located in Head Hall, D-Level, Room D11 . Our hours of operation are: Year-Round: Monday through Friday: 08:00 - 16:30 Enhanced Service 16:30 - 24:00 Standard Service 24:00 - 08:00 Closed Saturday & Sunday: 08:00 - 24:00 Standard Service 24:00 - 08:00 Closed UNB Holidays **: 08:00 - 24:00 Standard Service 24:00 - 08:00 Closed * December 24 & December 31:	In Saint John, the ITS Help Desk is located in Hazen Hall, 3rd Floor, Room 336 . Our hours of operation are: September to March: Monday through Friday: 09:00 - 16:30 Enhanced Service 16:30 - 21:30 Standard Service 21:30 - 09:00 Closed Saturday, Sunday & UNB Holidays **: 10:30 - 21:30 Standard Service 21:30 - 10:30 Closed * December 25, 26, 31 & January 1: Closed April to August:

Figure 1 Hours of Service with campus designations

4. REVIEW CURRENT SITE FOR FRIENDLINESS, USABILITY. IMPLEMENT IDENTIFIED IMPROVEMENTS.

A number of areas were identified as requiring an improvement or enhancement of some kind. This included the following services:

- Outage posting
- Software download
- Knowledge base links page
- Useful utilities for users
- Service request
- Student Consultant recruiting

Statistics show web visits to the ITS Help Desk web pages have tripled since we began gathering statistics on the Fredericton campus site in 2000. Approximately 30% of this growth has occurred since the implementation of the integrated site last summer.

4.1 Outage posting

A major area identified for improvement was our outage posting services, previously known as Hotnews. This service was divided into two colour coded sections for Scheduled and Unscheduled outages. Outage times and dates were included. The affect of the outage on all UNB or only the Fredericton or Saint John campus clearly specified. A system was developed to indicate a change in a posting and when the outage was over.

4.2 Software download

The software download site was updated to provide a more intuitive interface. Users can download supported software or useful utilities categorized first by software type and then by operating system. Some licensing information is provided. For example, customers can easily distinguish whether the product is site licensed or

freeware by the symbols and colour. A software search function has also been added. The software download site underwent several iterations before reaching a model acceptable to all. Negotiation is underway to resolve questions of software download maintenance and site enhancements. Our plan is having a limited number of team members from both campuses be responsible for maintenance of specific aspects of the site. This avoids the problem of duplication and “Oops! I thought they were going to do it”.

4.3 Knowledge Bases

The knowledge base section was outdated. It was updated to provide links to vendor knowledge bases of UNB supported hardware and software.

4.4 Useful Utilities

A new addition to the site was the provision of utilities users might find of use. These include services such as checking your own IP address, and viewing the status of institutional servers. This section is expected to expand.

5. PROVIDE A SINGLE, SECURE RESOURCE PAGE FOR HELP DESK SPECIFIC UTILITIES.

A secure web page was designed specifically for professional help desk staff on both campuses to access special help desk services. From off the help desk web site professional staff can access utilities to manage current and scheduled outages services. These utilities allow them to post, update, edit, and resolve outages. Additional utilities provided (this list is constantly increasing) include utilities that check on network and server health, issue pings/traceroutes, re-set PIN’s, increase Fac/Staff e-mail quota, access to specified confidential user information. Many of the utilities are campus specific. Utilities are marked A=All, F=Fredericton and S=St John. Access is regulated through authentication.

Administrative Options :: [Issues/Maintenance](#) :: [Utilities](#) :: [Exit Secure Site](#)

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Self Serve :: Location & Hours :: Our Services :: F.A.Q. :: Student Consultants :: Request Assistance

A=For use by all ITS Help Desk staff; F=UNB Fredericton only; S=UNB Saint John only

Utilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -A- Access Footprints • -A- Access Tracker • -A- Database Username Lookup • -A- Email Dest/Birth Date/Bar Code • -A- ip Search (advanced) • -A- WebCl Query • -F- Page On-Call Person/Comms • -F- Report a Lab Problem 	Networking Tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -F- Ping • -F- Hostname Search • -F- Netaccess • -F- NetSaint • -F- Search Route and Switch Rules • -F- Tpmade • -S- UNB(S) Server Monitors
Check/Reset <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -A- Reset Pin (see g_Services > Admin Info) • -A- Student Advising Check (see g_Services > Student Advising) • -A- Reset Fac/Staff Novell Password (see desktop > nwdmin32) • -F- Increase Faculty/Staff E-mail Quota (see instructions) 	Documentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -F- Level 1 Experts • -F- Operations Procedures • -F- Referral List
List Archives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -A- All Technical Issues • -A- All Scheduled Maintenance • -F- CIPA • -F- CSPLoc • -F- CSOSTUD • -F- ITS-L 	

Figure 2 Utilities site for professional help desk staff

6. PROVIDE A SINGLE, SECURE RESOURCE PAGE FOR STUDENT CONSULTANT SPECIFIC UTILITIES.

As in many universities, students provide additional staff for the help desk. A special secure help desk web site was developed to provide a single point of entry into all student consultant specific services. These include some, but not all of the utilities available to the professional help desk staff.

This is an area expected to grow with function such as the student consultant schedule, work hour submission page, lab printer checks/refills, special event pictures, lab workstation availability display, hour availability submission, remote printer status and control, special instructions and more.

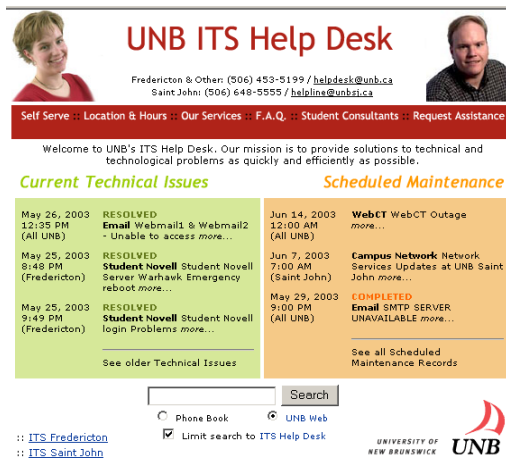


Figure 3 ITS Help Desk Web Site Home Page

7. PROVIDE A METHOD OF TRACKING AVAILABILITY OF MULTISYSTEM SERVICES.

An innovated service incorporated into the current and scheduled outage utilities is the ability to define the service affected, and the duration of the outage. The information is in stored in a MySQL database. Management is provided with a reporting screen that allows them to list all outages, and their duration pertaining to a

particular services. This allows them to answer such questions as “what is our full availability of our email service?”. This information has been difficult obtain when the various components of the service may reside on a large number of servers.

8. DESIGN A BOLD NEW LOOK.

The bi-campus web team came up with a design incorporating bright cheerful colors. Site navigation allowed users to move easily throughout the site as well as access other UNB sites that have relevant technical information. The design included photos of the full-time help desk staff so users can put a face to the name on the other end of the phone. This creates a more personal touch for our users.

9. USE THE INTEGRATED SITE AS A TOOL TO IMPROVE INTER-CAMPUS RELATIONS.

Using the bi-campus web team to design the web site was method of providing a neutral party to ensure that the needs of both campuses were addresses. Although the two campuses are only an hour and a half apart, face to face meetings were sometimes difficult to arrange. Video conferencing enabled both campuses provide required input into the project. It brought the 2 campuses closer together, generated friendships, cooperation and a better understanding of how we our support for our customers and the tools we use are the same and how we differ.

10. CHALLENGES

A number of challenges had to be met to complete the project. Fredericton had to realize that the Saint John campus, due to limited staff, was unable to drive the project forward nor provide programming resources. Fredericton was required to provide this for the benefit of all. The larger Fredericton campus also had to realize, that the Saint John campus was equally important, compromise was required to provide a reasonable solution for both. Adjusting to these realities, delayed the project completion.

The key to success is constant communication between Help Desk staff, without assumptions of site ownership on either side.