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TERADATA UNIVERSITY NETWORK

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Abstract

Teradata, a division of NCR, created the Teradata University Network (www.teradatauniversitynetwork.com), a premier learning and teaching resource for faculty interested in data warehousing, DSS/BI, and database. Content-driven and managed by academic leaders in the field, this portal's content includes course syllabi; access to software; Power Point presentations (with speaker's notes); cases, projects, and assignments (with teaching notes); book chapters and articles; the Teradata library; Web-based courses; and links to related sites. A separate site for students, the Teradata Student Network (www.teradatastudentnetwork.com), contains a subset of the above materials, including access to software; cases, projects, and assignments (without teaching notes or solutions); book chapters and articles; the Teradata library; and links to related sites. This gift from Teradata to the IS academic community facilitates the development and teaching of data warehousing, DSS/BI, and database courses.

Keywords: Teradata, educational portal, data warehousing, DSS, BI, database

Background Information

In 2001, Teradata, a division of NCR, and a leading vendor of data warehousing products, decided to develop closer ties with colleges and universities. Teradata had multiple objectives. They wanted:

- (1) students to be more familiar with Teradata's products,
- (2) for Teradata to be better positioned to hire outstanding college graduates,
- (3) for Teradata's managers and professionals to be more familiar with academic thinking and research, and
- (4) to contribute to information systems education around the world.

To help think through how these objectives might be best met, Teradata contacted Hugh Watson, who worked with them in the past on various projects.

The discussions with Watson led to the decision to create the Teradata University Network (TUN), a premier learning and teaching resource for faculty interested in data warehousing, data mining, DSS/BI, and database. Faculty would be able to access a variety of resources (e.g., articles) using a web browser. For students, there would be a companion resource called the Teradata Student Network (TSN). An important decision was that leading academicians in the field would provide the guidance and direction for TUN and TSN. Teradata would provide the financial resources, develop and maintain the TUN website, and contribute educational content.

It was recognized that the long-run success of TUN would depend on the reactions and actions of information systems faculty members. They must find it to be an important resource for their teaching and learning. They must also be willing to share the resources they develop, whether it is a course syllabus, article, case, or project.

The initial plans for TUN were presented at Partners 2001, Teradata's large users' group conference. In addition to Teradata management, leading academicians were in attendance for the presentation and learned about TUN. The presentation solidified the support for TUN and generated valuable suggestions.

During the next year, many important milestones were accomplished. Membership on the Advisory Board was finalized. Jeff Hoffer (University of Dayton) and Barbara Wixom (University of Virginia) were named Associate Directors. Paul Gray (Claremont University), Sal March (Vanderbilt University), Arun Sen (Texas A&M University), and Robert Winter (University of St. Gallen, Switzerland) were named to the Board, as was Ron Swift (Teradata) who provided much of the early support for Teradata's educational initiative. Alan Chow (Teradata) was named executive sponsor.

Also during the next year, the initial design and testing of TUN and TSN were completed, and content began to be added. Promotion of TUN and TSN began at AMCIS 2002 with promotional flyers and with an announcement on ISWorld in September 2002.

At Partners 2002, TUN was once again presented. At this session, Alan Chow, who is in charge of Teradata product development and sales support, said that he was willing to commit the resources needed to make Teradata software available through an ASP arrangement. Data would be loaded into a Teradata database, and faculty and students could access and analyze the data using a web browser. Colleges and universities would not have to obtain, install, and maintain the Teradata database and other software.

Through the fall of 2002 and spring of 2003, Teradata software was placed on a server, loaded with data, and tested. In May of 2003, the availability of Teradata software was announced to TUN members and through ISWorld so that faculty could plan to use it in their fall 2003 classes.

Accessing and Using TUN and TSN

To gain access to TUN, faculty must first go to www.teradatauniversitynetwork.com and register. In addition to providing information such as name, university, and desired password, applicants must provide the URL of a web page that shows that they are a teaching faculty member. TUN contains material that is only for faculty members, such as the solutions to cases, projects, and assignments. After their application is authenticated (usually within 24 hours), they can access TUN by using their email address as their ID and the password that they specified.

The portal's content includes:

1. Course syllabi (for data warehousing, data mining, DSS/BI, and database courses)
2. Access to software (Teradata database, MicroStrategy/Teradata, with more software to come)
3. Power Point presentations (with speaker's notes)
4. Cases, projects, and assignments (with teaching notes)
5. Book chapters and articles
6. The Teradata library (on topics such as CRM and data mining)
7. Web-based courses (1 to 2 hours in length)
8. Links to related sites

A separate site for students, www.teradatastudentnetwork.com, contains a subset of the above materials, including:

1. Access to software
2. Cases, projects, and assignments (without teaching notes)
3. Book chapters and articles
4. The Teradata library
5. Links to related sites

TSN is protected with a password that is changed periodically. Faculty can learn the password on TUN or receive it through regular communications as a TUN member.

A Typical Session

Consider how a typical faculty member might use TUN and TSN. Professor Terabyte is teaching a database course for the first time. After becoming a TUN member, he goes to the TUN website and looks at the various course syllabi that are available. He finds one that has the mix and technical topics that he plans to include. It is even from the author of the textbook that he plans

to use. He then looks at the cases, projects, and assignments that are available and finds several that meet his needs. All of them provide teaching notes, which will make his work a lot easier. He also finds several PowerPoint presentations that he can customize and use. Professor Terabyte then sees that the data set for the textbook that he is planning to use is available in a Teradata database that students can access from TSN. Whereas, in the past, other faculty members encountered difficulties with the database software they used, TUN provided

Professor Terabyte with commercial software of the highest quality. Furthermore, his students would not be limited to toy problems. They could work on sufficiently large problems that are representative of what they would see on the job. To get himself up-to-date on recent developments in the field, he even subscribes to several of the electronic newsletters that are available from TUN's related sites section. In about an hour, Professor Tearabyte obtained some great ideas for teaching his database course and identified some resources that he will use. He also decides to submit to TUN the materials that he develops for his database course. An easy-to-use content submission form on TUN collects metadata about the submitted content and allows the faculty member to attach the content or provide an URL where the content can be accessed. Professor Terabyte will definitely be back next semester when he will be teaching a data warehousing course for the first time.

Conclusion

Teradata made a significant commitment and gift to information systems education. Through a single portal, faculty can access the resources needed to teach courses in data warehousing, data mining, DSS/BI, and database. This gift is especially important in the underdeveloped parts of the world which has greater difficulties in obtaining educational resources. Colleges and universities have access to state-of-the-art software without the difficulties associated with installing and maintaining it locally. Comprehensive data sets are maintained that give students the opportunity to do realistic, computational complex queries and analyses.

In data warehousing, the phrase "a journey rather than a destination" is often heard. It is used to communicate that there is never an end point, only an on-going trip. A data warehouse is never completed, there is always more to do. This phrase also applies to TUN. The TUN Advisory Board and Teradata have on-going discussions about how TUN and TSN might be even a more valuable resource. We solicit your thoughts about how TUN and TSN can be enhanced and improved.