

CDIA Web Development: A mix of LAMP and RIA that lacks focus

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The B.U. Center for Digital Imaging Arts has just added another core curriculum to their stable of information technology certificates by introducing the **Web Development Certificate**. As you may know, they completely **won me over** with their Digital Photography program, and one of my coworkers at Adobe has been raving about their Audio Production curriculum as well. As such, I have high expectations that they will deliver great instructors for the chosen curriculum.

Their Web Development certificate program, founded on more than 20 courses, emphasizes the use of PHP and MySQL as core technologies, including a Rich Media Web Development subtopic focusing on the use of Flash and ActionScript. Along the way there's a sprinkling of Javascript, XML related technologies, and AJAX, and the course is capped off with some Content Management and Web 2.0 social network topics.

While the technologies composing the curriculum are safe choices, I have a biased belief that as a creative choice it is not cutting edge and the school would benefit greatly by the introduction of other Adobe technologies such as **ColdFusion**, **Flex**, and **AIR** if the school truly wants to prepare students for the future of **Rich Internet Application** development for the Web.

After all, ColdFusion is the mother of all Web Application languages as the first technology for the production of database-driven websites. ColdFusion is now at version 8 and is chock full of cutting edge Rapid Application Development features including **AJAX integration**, rich charting and graphing, and programatic image manipulation among the many new features in this last release. ColdFusion rocks as the best Web Application Development choice out there by allowing developers to utilize a wealth of powerful features and to do it fast in record time. But hey, I was on the ColdFusion 8 engineering team, so as I said, I *am* biased.

While the CDIA Web Development curriculum emphasizes Flash for creating Rich Media Web Apps, Flex is where its at for the Left Brained programmers out there. Adobe describes Flex as "a highly productive, free open source framework for building and maintaining expressive web applications that deploy consistently on all major browsers, desktops, and operating systems". Flex is Flash for programmers... Flex is written in a tag based language known as MXML, its extended with ActionScript, and it runs in the Flash Player so it produces exactly the same results in all browsers whether your clients are using MSIE, FireFox, or Safari and no matter they are on Windows, Mac OS X, or Linux. Your design, your styles, your layout... its all the same everywhere.

At a minimum, the curriculum provides only the MP of the popular **LAMP** platform, and they should at least add basic Apache setup/configuration and Linux fundamentals if the curriculum intends to adhere to the Free and Open Source Software path. Although, while on the topic of **FOSS**, the **Adobe Flex SDK** is in fact both free and **open source**. ColdFusion is also available in a free Developer's edition for home, business, or academic use, and it has all the features of ColdFusion Enterprise but is limited to accepting web requests from localhost and 2 remote computers which is sufficient for development and testing.

To sum up, knowing how great their photography program is at CDIA definitely lends confidence that they will deliver fantastic instruction, although their choice of technologies follows neither a true FOSS / LAMP approach nor a true RIA approach. Rather, the curriculum picks and chooses between them for a less than complete story.

On a related note, some of the Flex marketing and educational folks at Adobe are **soliciting feedback on a proposed curriculum** they're developing to better incorporate Flex into academic curriculums everywhere. Check it out.

Related Articles

- **[Easy Rich Internet Applications with ColdFusion 8](#)**
- **[ColdFusion 8: Believe the Hype](#)**
- **[Flex Showcase](#)**