CNS /Update Newsletter Feature

EAGLE Nests at NERDC

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NERDC is proud of its role as the home system of EAGLE: the Enhanced Application Generation Language for the Enterprise. EAGLE is a software system which enables mainframe databases to be directly accessed from the Internet. It also allows information from any other TCP/IP-enabled system to be integrated into the mainframe web site.

EAGLE was developed by programmers in the Office of the University Registrar at the University of Florida. In last year's NERDC Annual Review 1997-98, we reported on how UF students first benefitted from this new technology when the Spring 1998 grades were made available as a new EAGLE-powered application. Since that time, all of the student Web applications have been made available using EAGLE, including grades, registration for classes, class schedules, credit card payment, financial aid, textbook information and many more, with new applications being added at a steady pace. All of these utilize the same CICS/MVS v4.1 software maintained centrally by NERDC.

EAGLE is a TCP/IP sockets-based CICS application which enables access to CICS resources (files, temp storage queues, DB2, etc.) and information from other computing systems with a set of tools that can be used in native CICS 3270 sessions or that can be accessed through the Web. This eliminates the need for standard legacy solutions such as the rewriting of existing applications on other computing platforms or the use of what are often cumbersome and expensive third-party "screen-scraping" products. The speed and flexibility of these new applications reflect a vast improvement over earlier solutions.

Eagle at UF

In a question-and-answer session with the principal developers of EAGLE, UF Chief Information Officer Earl Robbins and Assistant Director of University Computing Alan Cook, we learned more about plans for EAGLE implementation at UF.

Q: Are UF developers supposed to use EAGLE?

A: That is more than one question. In order to have a seamless interface for our Web users, we need to have a single state engine for UF (the "state engine" tracks user activity within a "session"). EAGLE currently provides a mainframe state engine for ISIS, SOARS, and the state-wide FACTS system. We would like to propose that UF Web applications use the EAGLE engine for all UF pages. EAGLE will have the ability to adapt to, and incorporate, other solutions which are already in place. The second question is whether or not to use EAGLE for dynamically generating pages. That part is optional but it is recommended that all UF application developers at least learn about how to use EAGLE.

Q: Will UF application developers have to adapt their Web applications to it?

A: Yes, they will have to adapt to the UF state engine if they use it.

Q: Can EAGLE make data residing at NERDC (especially VSAM files) available to applications in real time?

A: Yes, VSAM, DB2, any resource available via TCP/IP or from CICS.

Q: As EAGLE seems to be the official tool, will developers have to stop development on Web
based applications that don't use it?

A: No, we want to incorporate many methods and platforms for building pages. EAGLE is especially useful for mainframe data access and can connect to other platforms, but we do not intend to mandate the use of the EAGLE HTML generator on the mainframe. The state engine is a separate function from the Web page generation.

Q: When/how will UF application developers learn EAGLE?

A: We implemented EAGLE classes on campus this Fall.

A Bright Future

Additional EAGLE applications in development, or planned for the near future, include document-image distribution and retrieval, student transcript requests, directory information for prospective employers, graduate and undergraduate Admission Applications, certification requests, and e-mail or alerts for students.

Further out, Robbins says they are looking toward possible deployment to other universities and/or corporations which have legacy systems without a Web interface, other Florida data centers, implementation on the IBM VSE operating system, facilitating a seamless interface with the IBM CICS Web Interface, and possible deployment in emerging markets (such as China, India, South Africa).

NERDC looks forward to continuing to play an important supporting role in the development of this revolutionary new information technology.

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Your Comments are Welcome

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and all UFIT documentation. Please send your comments to:

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