

Distance learning courses: adjusting to conditions in Russia and NIS countries

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Abstract

In developing new software its use as an educational tool remains paramount in the programmers' minds. This development allows the lesson material itself to be supplied in different forms. The first interactive lessons in different languages for the students in coastal management, meteorology, environmental and other sciences are now available via Internet. These on-line lessons have the advantage of hypertext links and Java scripts to make the lessons more interactive, responding to the needs of the individual user. Besides, Java opened the door to really interactive training through platform-independence. Nevertheless, while striving for the higher degree of interactivity and filling the educational Web pages with Java applets in efforts to provide new educational facility to the world, attention should be paid to the fact that the number of Internet users substantially exceeds the number of users who have reliable Internet access. In our case, low speeds of data transfer bring to the first plane the idea of combining pre-installed platform-dependent software on one hand and Internet accessible instructions to training modules and their updates on the other.

The examples of the platform independent approach could be found on EuroMET home page, the European project on distance learning in meteorology, <http://euromet.meteo.fr/>.

The combined approach was realized in UNESCO project on CAL modules in remote sensing. The first on-line CSI-UNESCO lesson in English ("Deriving sea surface temperature maps from the ERS-1 Along Track Scanning Radiometer") is available from the University of Colorado, USA: http://frodo.colorado.edu/~cjd/atsr_sst/at_l2f.html.

Two pilot lessons for the Baltic sea and Gulf of Finland can be accessed interactively over the Internet from St.Petersburg, Russia: <http://www.dux.ru/csi/winbilko/index.htm>. These lessons comprise:

- an Intro to help the user to adjust software
- Lesson 1 (in English and Russian) Determination of surface types, snow and ice characteristics using visual study of AVHRR images and simple methods of its numerical processing
- Lesson 2 (in English and Russian) Comparison different methods of retrieval sea surface temperature in the Gulf of Finland.