

Aktuelle Meldung

HPI: Acquire or refresh state-of-the-art IT knowledge for free with iTunes U

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Potsdam. From today on Hasso Plattner Institute (HPI) provides state-of-the-art knowledge about information technology free of charge via iTunes University, a service by Apple (<http://itunes.hpi.uni-potsdam.de>). Together with HPI, three other top universities are also going live with their courses on iTunesU today: RWTH Aachen, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, and Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich. These are the first four German participants on iTunesU. Until today iTunes U hosted only lectures and other content from about 200 North American and UK institutions of higher education. Among them are US institutions like Stanford and the MIT, but also the British top universities Oxford and Cambridge. In order to download the content and documentation which are provided in German or English users do not need to be students: anybody around the world can download free of charge.

“Especially in the fast moving high tech industry continuing education is becoming ever more important. The growing demand for professional, industry-specific knowledge transfer can be met by such innovative platforms as iTunes U,” HPI director Professor Christoph Meinel explained his institute’s participation. As the chair for Internet Technologies and Systems the 54-year-old scientist is one of the most experienced German E-learning and tele-teaching experts.

“Because there is no way around lifelong learning, we have been providing interested parties with the opportunity to bring their IT knowledge up to date for many years, using our own platform www.tele-task.de which people can access anytime and anywhere free of charge,” Meinel emphasized. iTunes U would now provide an additional opportunity to select course content according to individual interests and requirements, to download them to the computer, and to display them on mobile devices. HPI, which has been awarded the title “distinguished place” for innovation three times by the initiative “Germany – Land of Ideas”, has branded its iTunes U appearance with the slogan “Move IT”.

HPI Podcasts show lecturers with their desktop presentation

Germany’s excellence center for IT Systems Engineering already has thousands of video courses from several hundred lecturers in its permanently growing portfolio. Since the summer of 2007 the Potsdam-based researchers have been putting online podcasts, i.e. short, thematically determined sections of a lecture. There are by now about 2,000 such podcasts. Similar to what can be seen in the videos of entire HPI lectures, they also show the desktop or blackboard presentation, in addition to the lecturer. The new

picture-in-the-picture technology is adapted to the miniature display of iPods and other mobile display devices. Until now conventional educational video podcasts have only broadcasted the picture of the speaker and his voice.

Learn anytime anywhere – whenever you feel like it

“Those who download the podcasts to their small mobile display devices can watch them on the bus, in the waiting room, or outside in the park – whenever there is time and motivation”, Internet-Professor Meinel describes the advantages of flexible learning on the go. Users can either download the contents one by one or subscribe by mouse click to an ongoing course or lecture series. The iTunes U platform will automatically load them as soon as they are made available by HPI. The iTunes U content management creates a folder named Hasso Plattner Institute which contains the IT content for the user. The latter can be synchronized with the mobile device and thus also be viewed while on the move – whether to prepare for an exam or to fill certain knowledge gaps.

Semantic Searches: Find the relevant video content online

Due to the rapidly growing demand for fresh, up-to-date scientific knowledge in digital form researchers at HPI are working intensively on the development of technologies for semantic searches in audio and video files. The goal is to facilitate the detection of specific topically relevant passages within the recorded lectures in the future. For the time being, however, HPI encourages users of the tele-TASK platform to network, discuss the contents, and point each other to particularly interesting course content or features.

Another project of the future at Hasso Plattner Institute is “tele-TASK TV.” It aims to appeal to a larger group of people than just those who only want to view content on the computer or on mobile video players (so-called “lean-forward users”). “In the future, computer science contents will be edited for the large TV screen in the living room and broadcasted via IP-TV. With this educational TV on the internet we can also reach the ‘lean-back user’, that is people who want to relax on their couch, yet still do something for their professional training. This way classical entertainment like watching TV becomes edutainment”, Meinel predicts.

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