

Synergeia:

A Synchronous and Asynchronous Extension of BSCW for Collaborative Learning Interactive Event at CSCL 2003

Wolfgang Appelt, Rudolf Ruland

Fraunhofer Institute for Applied Information Technology, Sankt Augustin, Germany

Gerry Stahl

College of Information Science and Technology, Drexel University, USA

This Interactive Event of CSCL 2003 demonstrates the Synergeia system. Synergeia is a CSCL system developed during the past two years as part of the EU research project, ITCOLE. Synergeia was made publicly available in April, both as a service from FIT's Web site and as a downloadable package for local installation.

Conference visitors can experiment with Synergeia and evaluate its features and user interface from any networked computer. Simply set your Internet browser to <http://fit.fraunhofer.de/bscl2/bscl.cgi/> (?). Sign in as one of the following virtual students:

<u>User Name</u>	<u>Password</u>	<u>Group</u>
Andy	a	K-12
Bart	b	K-12
....	

You will find yourself in your *personal learning space* with a *personal knowledge building perspective* and enrolled as a student in the *Course: Collaborative Learning*.

Click on the name of that course. You enter the *course learning space*, with a *course knowledge building area* for discussion among everyone. As the course demo goes on, *knowledge building portfolios* from different groups of students will appear in this *course learning area* and you can read them and discuss them in the *course knowledge building perspective*.

At this point, you might want to change the language of the Synergeia interface. Since it was built to be used in schools in a number of European countries, it allows the interface to appear in the following languages: English, German, Finnish, Spanish, Dutch, Greek and Italian. However, since you are using Synergeia at an English-speaking conference and most of the names or content of the areas are in English, you may want to work in English.

You can see that the students in the course are divided into three small working groups to do their collaboration activities. Click on your group. You are now in the *group learning area*. In addition to a *group knowledge building perspective* for your group discourse, there are three *proposal areas* that the instructor has set up. These proposals define collaborative activities for you to engage in during the conference. Come back to these area periodically during the conference to interact asynchronously with other conference participants.

The three activities are listed below. Enter each proposal area to try them out:

Proposal: Experiences. *Create documents describing collaborative learning experiences that you have had. Each person should fill in one or more documents with their name, email, institution, system used, class size, group size, topic, results achieved, problems encountered, suggestions for*

improvement. This is a collaborative sharing exercise. Share your experiences with the other members of your group. Read their experiences. When you think enough experiences have been listed and discussed, vote to approve this proposal. When most members have approved it, the whole proposal area will be moved to the course learning area so everyone in the course can learn about these experiences. The instructor might then create a new Experiences proposal for more people to try out.

Proposal: Systems. *Decide on the ten (10) most important software applications to consider for classroom collaborative learning, and describe each briefly.* This combines brainstorming (where everyone enters suggestions) and negotiation (where everyone has to agree on which are the most important apps to list). When you think the list has been adequately refined, vote to send it to the course learning area.

Proposal: Websites. *Decide on the three (3) most important websites for CSCL.* This combines brainstorming (where everyone enters suggestions) and negotiation (where everyone has to agree on which are the most important apps to list). When you think the list has been adequately refined, vote to send it to the course learning area. Don't you think the Synergeia site is one of the most important?

The rest of Synergeia. Be sure to explore the following areas and functions of Synergeia:

MapTool. In the course, group and proposal learning area, the user names of all participants are listed. The names of users who are currently logged in are in bold face. The names of users who are currently in MapTool are in red. From a group or proposal learning area, you can click on the icon in front of this list of names to enter MapTool. A Java applet will open on your screen. MapTool is designed to allow groups to construct conceptual maps collaboratively and synchronously. There is a shared whiteboard for drawing and a chat stream for discussion the conceptual map as it is being constructed. The chat stream and drawing can be archived for future continuation or review.

Knowledge Building Areas. These are threaded discussion forums. They support thinking types as used in CSILE, but with multiple sets of thinking types defined. The interface for the knowledge building areas is based on FLE3.

Etc. Synergeia incorporates all the functionality of BSCW.