Problems With COTS Software: A Case Study
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Abstract

This article reports on the use of Commercial-Off-The-Shelf (COTS) software for developing a dynamic environment for an online public access catalogue (OPAC). COTS products are widely used throughout the industry. While there are many potential benefits, use of COTS components is also fraught with pitfalls. The research on creating a dynamic environment for OPACs is based on the previous work in this area, Public Access Catalogue Extension (PACE), which was developed with custom-based software programs. Although in the previous research project all the programs were successfully developed in C and C++, the present project relied very little on original and custom programming. Instead, a number of COTS products were used to construct the dynamic environment: Macromedia Director, 3D Dreams, Extreme 3D, Crossroads, and Easybase. These COTS products were chosen for their ability to produce the desired results, their availability at reasonable costs, and their capability to integrate with one another. A small experimental database with one hundred MARC records was constructed in Easybase. Models were built in Extreme 3D and converted to 3D Studio using Crossroads. These models were used in 3D Dreams to create three-dimensional environments for use in Macromedia Director.

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In the case study, the current COTS and OS component-based software development process is presented. Research problem area Chapter 1. Third-party components in software development Chapter 2. Case study of third-party components and glue software. Chapter 3. Conclusion and further research Chapter 4. This kind of problem can be avoided by proper evaluation, benchmarking and communicating with other component's users before purchase. (Morisio et al. 2000; Reifer 1997.)