Announcing MoodleReader Version 2

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MoodleReader is a free online graded reader assessment system that assesses whether students have read their books. It has quizzes for over 1700 graded readers for all the major publishers including some young learner quizzes. MoodleReader is designed to be an easy-to-use and administer assessment scheme for busy teachers who need a system to track the progress of dozens or hundreds of students. The system has now been in use for about three years and has gained popularity as one method that teachers can use to ascertain whether their students have really read the books that they claim to have read. This article provides a brief background to the project and then describes how schools can set up MoodleReader for use with their classes through a specially designed website. The system only requires one person to follow the simple set-up instructions for an entire institution.

MoodleReader is a software module for use with the free Moodle online course management system (CMS) which is used by thousands of institutions worldwide. MoodleReader was created for use within the Kyoto Sangyo University CMS because Moodle already had a robust system for logging in and tracking student access, as well as a system for generating randomized quizzes from a larger bank of questions. Thus MoodleReader could become a simple "add-on" module. The MoodleReader software adds to Moodle a way to control which quizzes students can take according to their current reading level, the frequency with which they can take quizzes, and the time allowed for taking the quizzes. It creates a unique test for each student because the system randomizes the selection of test items from a larger bank of 20 questions or more for each book in the quiz bank. The system logs how many books (and which books) have been read and how many words they have read over a period of time (Figure 1).
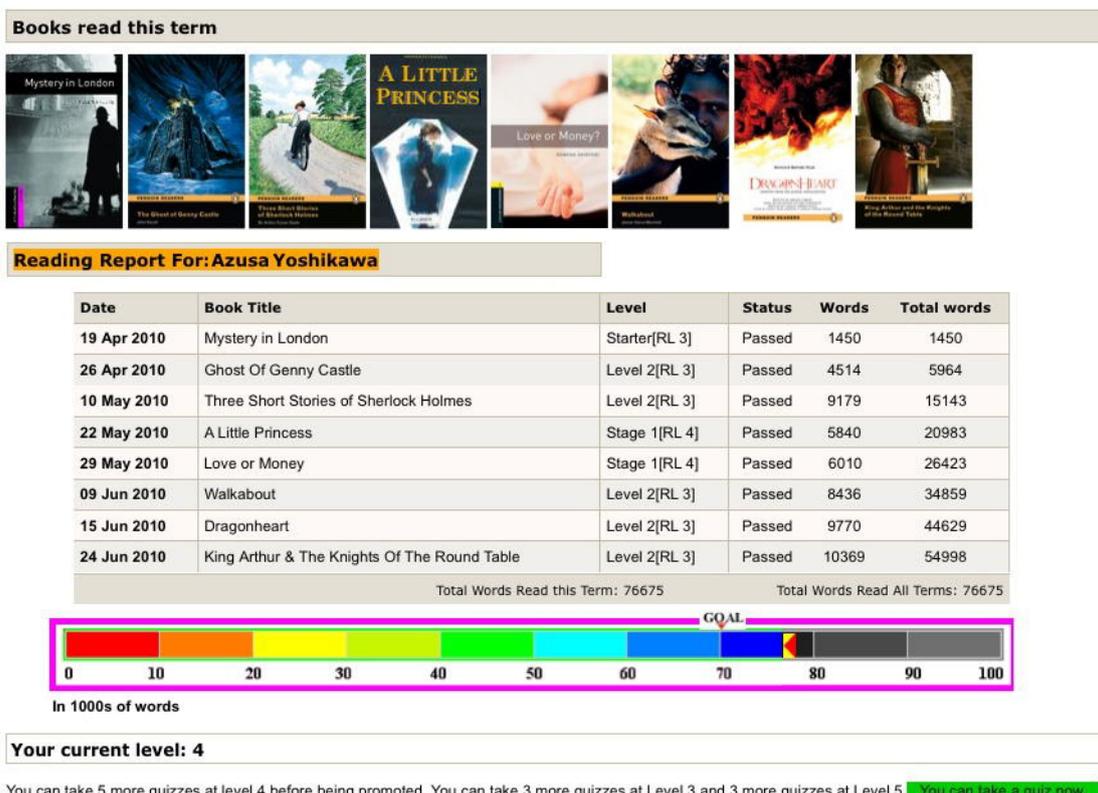

Figure 1. The student record screen

MoodleReader can take the place of, or supplement, book reports or other kinds of assessment which are often a burden both for the students to produce and the teachers to assess. It also has a strong motivational factor for students since they can slowly amass a "stamp collection" of the covers of each book that they have read and for which they have successfully passed the quiz as well as monitor how well they are doing over a long period of time.

The quizzes have been designed simply to test whether the students have read the claimed book or not and therefore do not contain questions requiring deep comprehension or recall of detail. Questions in a single 10-item quiz are of four types, True/False, Multiple Choice, "Who said this?" and chronological ordering of events. This final type was specially designed for MoodleReader and uses a drag and drop interface (Figure 2).
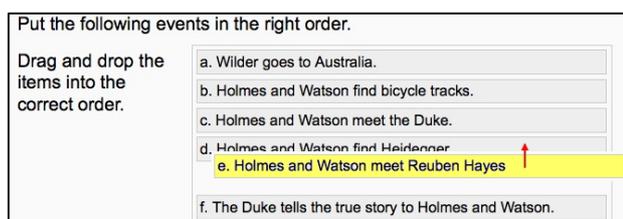

Figure 2. Ordering question type – Specially made for MoodleReader

Teachers can look at their students' performance and access detailed student records and either view them online or download them as an Excel file. The system now contains quizzes for over 1700 books, both graded readers and "youth literature" normally used by native speaker children. These quizzes have mostly been contributed by teacher volunteers although a number of publishers including Oxford, Heinle Cengage, Compass, Abax, mpi and R.I.C. have all found a budget to have quizzes created for the system. A quality control team at Kyoto Sangyo University regularly analyzes the quiz results and improves quizzes with defective items.

The MoodleReader system developed at Kyoto Sangyo University is also available online for other institutions to use at http://www.moodlereader.org at no cost. For those institutions already running a Moodle system, the KSU MoodleReader module can be installed on any institution's own internal computer system. For institutions running MoodleReader locally, the administrator is automatically notified of any new or improved quizzes and can download

them via a simple interface. The software currently runs on Moodle 1.9.x but for those wishing to install the system on their school's own Moodle, a version for Moodle version 2.1 will be available by December 2011.

Expanding the program to other schools

From the program's inception, the Kyoto Sangyo University staff realized that cooperation of teachers from other institutions, as well as the help of the various publishers, was needed in order to build up the quiz bank to include as many graded readers as possible. This required us to make the program as user-friendly and transparent as possible. To this end MoodleReader 2.0 has a redesigned interface. Teachers and students log in with a simple login panel that is tailored for their own school, and are brought directly to the student's individual screen. Teachers have access to the reports and other required functions directly from the student screen.

Setting up

One representative of each school, here termed the "manager", will set up the required courses for the entire school using a user-friendly interface. The interface walks them through four steps.

1) Entering the basic details of the school – name, geographic location, time zone, etc. A short but unique prefix, such as "KSU" is also selected to identify students from that institution. This will appear before all student IDs and course names so that they will remain unique within the system.

2) Managers will have the option to customize the interface. A simple drag and click interface allows the manager to select colors that match their own school's theme. The school logo can also be easily uploaded and displayed at the top of the student pages.

3) Creating the courses and classes – The manager can create levels such as "Year 1", "Year 2", etc. and then within each one, create a separate grouping for each class. For example, they can create an Oral Communication course which has several individual classes (e.g. OC1a, OC1b etc) run by different teachers. The data for each student in each institution, course or class can be monitored as a whole or individually.

4) Enrolling students and teachers – Student data can be input manually on a simple interface to create each student's individual login page. Optionally, teachers can easily enroll their students in seconds

from a spreadsheet through a bulk upload function. The spreadsheet should contain each user's ID, name and optionally their email addresses and passwords. Once this is done teachers can quickly assign students to courses and classes.

Once the students have been enrolled, the manager or each instructor can set various parameters unique to the class or institution. These include setting the graded reader starting level for the students; the target goal in words-read for the course or within a date range; how frequently students can take tests; and the duration of the time students have to take tests.

When fully completed, Moodlereader 2.0 will have many walk-though help screens. Additionally, we plan to create "how-to" videos to further ease the process and make them available on the ERF's YouTube Channel: http://www.youtube.com/user/TheErfoundation?feature=mhee.

Using MoodleReader

Students log into the system with a simple URL such as: http://moodlereader.org/ksu-xxxx where "ksu-xxxx" represents their own user ID. They then enter their password and are taken to their personalized page. Managers can look up usernames or passwords in their "admin area" if they are forgotten.

Once in the system, the students select the publisher and series of their reader (e.g. Oxford University Press Bookworms), then they select the book itself (e.g. *The Elephant Man*) and click "Take quiz." This presents them with a variety of questions which are designed to test whether they have read that book. The quiz is time-restricted (usually about 8-10 minutes) to prevent students from looking up all of the answers as they see the questions. When done, they respond to one more question on how well they liked the book and then are told whether they passed or failed. In the spirit of the extensive reading approach, students are not informed of their exact score, but rather whether they have been deemed to have read the book (i.e. passed the test). Note that the quizzes are NOT designed to directly assess how well they comprehended the finer points of the book, but to check if the book was read.

The system incorporates some measures to promote honest use. If a story (e.g. *Anne of Green Gables*) is available from different publishers, each one has been coded to prevent students from taking quizzes of the other copies, so they can't gain points without additional reading. The records of books read in one school term are retained so that work cannot be duplicated in future classes. Furthermore, the system also has an advanced tracking system to alert teachers and students if it senses students are cheating. The teachers can view a list of students who have taken the same quiz at the same time in the same location and flag them as "cheated" if desired. Despite these measures, the determined student can always "beat the system" but the above measures do help to minimize the problem. The student records can be easily downloaded into an Excel spreadsheet.

Conclusion

The MoodleReader program may not be the answer for everyone. A teacher with small classes who can be personally involved with each student has other means to ascertain whether books have actually been read, but for those with large classes, who are currently relying on time-consuming book reports for assessment, and lack class time, the system has clear advantages.

The online MoodleReader website is easy to set up and administer for each institution. Once the students know how to use the system (usually only after they have taken one quiz), there is very little maintenance (usually only lost passwords). At the end of the course there is a detailed report on what each student has read. These data can be used to form part of the institution's assessment of each student as well as track their progress over many years at the institution.

Take a look at http://moodlereader.org. You'll be surprised how easy it is to use.

Acknowledgments

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