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Mobile Learning in the Netherlands: Real-time Database Access in an Educational Fieldwork Setting

Mobile technology offers new possibilities to support students during fieldwork. With handheld devices or Pocket PC's students can take their learning materials everywhere they go. When a Pocket PC Phone edition or a bluetooth connection is used, connectivity to networks is added. Browsing the web, sending and retrieving information and various modes of communication become possible. In our project we search for ways to use two new tools to support mobile learning:

- ◆ Blackboardunplugged is a very recently delivered 'building block' extension of Blackboard to support the use of learning materials on small mobile devices. This extension allows Blackboard users to download subsets of Blackboard webcontent on their pocket PC or to access content entirely through a wireless connection. Attention is paid to the readability of the materials when displayed on the small Pocket PC screens. Our experiences with the use of Blackboardunplugged in a fieldwork situation will be addressed in the presentation.
- ◆ ArcPad and CropViewer, resp. GIS software and a crop registration tool used by professional fieldworkers offers the possibility of storing location based fieldwork data . In our project, we look for ways to send these data to a remote server using GPRS-technology. When a functionality is added that gives the opportunity to view previously recorded data, in our view a rich fieldwork learning environment is available that will give fieldworkers the same information and instant feedback that office workers have while using a LAN.

In this presentation, mainly the educational implications and some technical implications of the use of CropViewer in combination with GPS, GIS and GPRS in fieldwork will be addressed.

This work is part of the Manolo project, a two-year collaborative project between the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Wageningen Universiteit.