

# *Snapshots in Productivity*

## **10 questions for...**

Read the compelling stories of IBM iSeries Professionals and their candid answers to 10 questions on rapid iSeries - Web Application Development and their experiences. Click on "more »" for the complete Q & A's. A quick read that's worth your time.

**Moraine Valley Community College-** [www.morainevalley.edu](http://www.morainevalley.edu)

**Michelle August, Information Management Systems  
Assistant Professor/Curriculum Coordinator**



Moraine Valley Community College is situated on a sprawling campus 23 miles southwest of Chicago's Loop. Moraine Valley integrates instruction in

computer technology and business to form classes in eCommerce. Moraine Valley is one of the leading colleges offering a System i curriculum. One of the IT courses they've offered for a few years teaches students how to build eBusiness Web sites using Moraine Valley's IBM iSeries model 520 and BCD's WebSmart, a popular iSeries Web Application Development solution.

**BCD: Is eCommerce important in today's iSeries business computing space?**

August: "Yes, definitely. Things are moving in that direction, even for those who are slow to adapt. Web connectivity has a significant impact on many facets of business. If organizations want to reach out to their supply chain they are going to have to make changes to the way their applications are accessed. From our perspective, it's clear that organizations are recognizing that they need people who are trained in eCommerce technologies.

Because of supply constraints, some organizations are going to run into a situation where they are not going to find people who know their way around eCommerce."

**BCD: Should more institutions like yours teach iSeries Web application development with tools like WebSmart?**

August: "Definitely. I participated in the IBM Summer School and Roundtable event this year and made a presentation on what my college is doing with its IT curriculum. At the last COMMON conference Moraine Valley won the IBM Innovation Award for Education Excellence for a System i client or college, so I talked about our integrated eCommerce curriculum and what we did to win this award. I also discussed our use of web application development tools including WebSmart. College instructors from around the country attended the roundtable and they were very interested. You need to train people for the things they are going to be doing in the future. They need to see all the advantages. If we just teach green screen programming, sure they will get a job however, we are not preparing them to change the way business needs to be done now and in the future. They should be exposed to the new technologies, not just the green screen stuff. Most of the other instructors at the IBM roundtable seemed to agree."

**BCD: Do you find WebSmart easy to teach? Do your students find WebSmart easy to learn?**

August: "Yes. I really liked the fact that it was easy for me to learn and subsequently teach. I first worked with WebSmart in a lab at COMMON. I was able to pick it up immediately -- it is very user friendly. That is what initially attracted me to WebSmart.

My students essentially have the same experience."

**BCD: How have you found BCD's training materials? Have you used BCD's technical support much?**

August: "Their training materials have been terrific. They have really been a lifesaver. I wouldn't have been able to incorporate WebSmart into the eCommerce courses to the extent that I have if I had to write all the course materials myself.

Relative to support, we have used WebSmart for a few years now and I've only needed to call them a few times."

**BCD: How quickly did your students adapt to WebSmart and do you feel they have a good understanding of how to build iSeries web applications after taking the course?**

August: "My students have picked up WebSmart very quickly and yes, they do have a good understanding as they create iSeries eCommerce applications that run on the Web."

**BCD: Do some of your students have prior experience with RPG? If so, how has WebSmart advanced their skills and general knowledge of iSeries web development?**

August: "At least half of my students are experienced IT people who are coming back to refresh their skills. There are always a few people every semester who know RPG. WebSmart has definitely given these people advanced skills that will be of value in their careers. They are often amazed that they can do so many different things on the i5 with WebSmart."

**BCD: What are some of the comments you've heard from students about WebSmart after the completion of the course?**

August: "The thing I hear from students over and over is how easy it was to create a really cool application. They get the skills to write something that is powerful, looks really neat, and is easy to use."

**BCD: Do you believe WebSmart can save time over other Web development methodologies?**

August: "If you are talking about development environments like Java, definitely. WebSmart is a huge timesaver. I would say there's a big difference there."

**BCD: Where are application development skills going in the short term?**

August: "Programming entire software applications by hand is becoming outmoded. Technicians will still need to know how programs work to make fine revisions or tweaks, but tools like WebSmart will do most of the work. Understanding business concepts is going to become more important for technicians. As it stands now, IT students typically never sit through a business class. We are unique as we have an MIS program with integrated business concepts."

**BCD: How would you assess the support you've received from BCD?**

August: "BCD has been absolutely terrific - they have been a huge help. I'm the administrator and I need to train other faculty members as they decide to incorporate System I into their courses. Therefore, the more support that organizations like BCD can give me the better it is because there's already so much to do. Eric Figura of BCD actually gave me training modules that I could use in our eCommerce courses. That was a huge help! And BCD is letting us use WebSmart for free. Anytime I've had any technical problems or questions all I had to do is pick up the phone. They are great in helping me work anything out quickly."

**BCD: How would you rate WebSmart at being an effective development tool for the iSeries community?**

August: "I think it's a great option for people. I love it. I absolutely love it."