

## WebCT and the FDR

By Dick Evans

WebCT is the course management system of choice at RIC at this point in time. It has served us well over the many years it has been used. However, as the years have gone on the size of each course has increased dramatically. Much has to do with the increased use of the features within WebCT. At first it was a nice repository of syllabi, assignments, and brief lecture notes. Most were simply copies of what used to be handed out in class. Now they could be made available to the students electronically and even off campus.

Then faculty learned to use quizzes, the grade book, and post PowerPoint slide decks and movie clips to give the students more material from which to learn. iPods became popular, so some taped lectures or just short audio clips or Podcasts for students to download to their various listening devices.

The short story is that the amount of space required for each course grew from kilobytes to megabytes and for some to gigabytes. The server used for WebCT and the associated hard disk space is taxed to its limit. The course backups are so large WebCT cannot take a previous year's course and move it to the new semester. There had to be a fix.

Along comes the Faculty Digital Repository (referred to as the FDR). It is an area on another server with a terabyte of storage. On it faculty can have folders for their personal (faculty) Web site, a private folder to store file accessible to only them, a media folder to store streaming video files (username and password required), and an coursework folder where file which were originally stored in WebCT can be placed (username and password required).

If the student accesses a coursework file from WebCT, the RIC username and password is assumed to be the same as used for access to WebCT. If their WebCT sign on is not the same as their RIC network sign on, they will have to enter their network sign on to access the files. This only occurs when someone other than a student, such as a staff member, takes a course and has a special sign on assigned by the WebCT administrator.

One big advantage to faculty of using the FDR is the ability to point multiple courses to the same material. If you are running three sections of a course, you may maintain three separate courses in WebCT, but have one set of common files each course can access. These might be files such as the syllabus for the course, assignment files, lecture notes, PowerPoint slide decks, streaming media files, files used in assignments or exams, and so forth.

This paper addresses two issues. The first is how to move a large course from one semester to another using the tools available in WebCT. The second it how to modify the new course to utilize the FDR for files previously stored in the My Files area in WebCT.

## Moving a Large Course

A course contains three distinct sets of data. One is the WebCT course itself with the pages, icons, grade book, quizzes, assignments, layout specifications, and other WebCT specific items. The second set

consists of the results of the assessments built into WebCT including emails sent and received and assignment attachments. The third, and the one we can control, are the files uploaded by faculty in the design and execution of the course and stored in My Files.

Homepage > **Manage Course**

### Manage Course

#### Manage Students

You can manage student information and grades.  
Import students  
View some students  
Search records

#### Backup Course

You can save and restore your course.  
Create backup  
Upload backup

Before beginning to trim the course, back it up.

**(Homepage > Manage Course > Backup Course > Create backup)**

Homepage > Manage Course > Backup Course > **Create Backup**

### Create Backup

Note: The backup filename is generated by WebCT.

Enter a short description of this backup file.


Enter a description of the backup, and then click **Create**

Homepage > Manage Course > **Backup Course**

### Backup Courses

Backup Filename	File Size (bytes)	Description
<input checked="" type="radio"/> 1078-RICOL-CIS-251-SEC01-10584_Dec16_1454.zip	324643645	end of semester
<input type="radio"/> 1078-RICOL-CIS-251-SEC01-10584_Sep03_1752.zip	52596862	Start Fall 2007

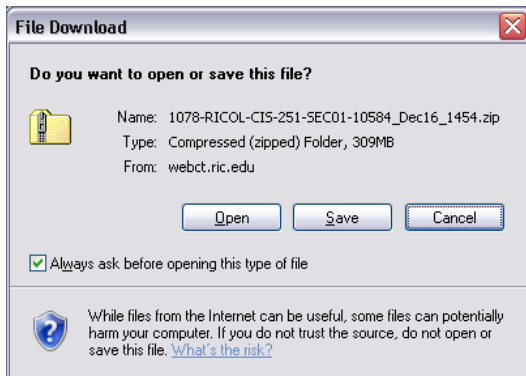
#### Actions

 indicates a selection is required from the main frame.

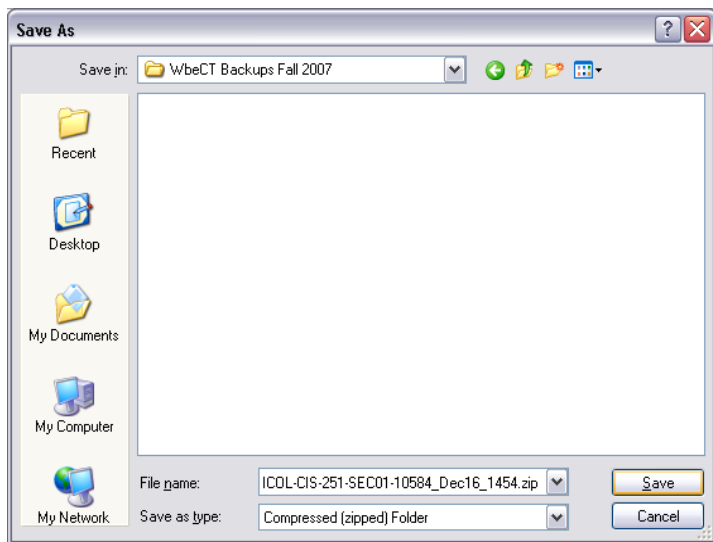
#### Options: Backup Files

Then download that backup to your local hard disk and probably burn it to a CD for safekeeping.

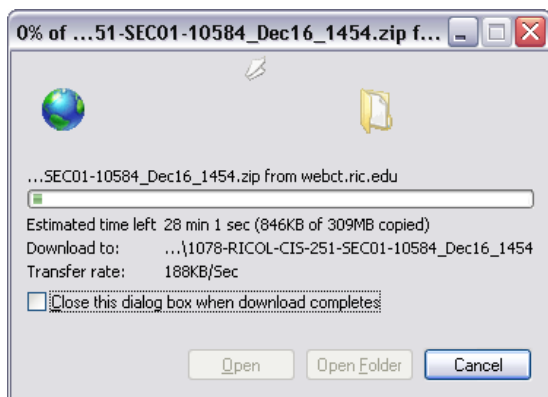
Select the backup file, and then under Actions, click **Download**.



Click Save



Choose (or create) a folder to hold the backup, and then click **Save**.



Depending on the size of the file being saved, this may take a very long time and is best accomplished at RIC rather than at home.

*NOTE: Even though the file extension is ZIP, the file is not a normal ZIP file and cannot be opened with the uncompress routine in Windows XP or with WinZIP. The format is peculiar to WebCT and can only be opened within WebCT.*

The backup contains all three sets of data, and could be used to rebuild the course if necessary, unless it is too large for WebCT to process it. Do not remove the backup file from the WebCT course at this time.

Using WebDAV (see white paper titled *Using WebDAV* at [http://www.ric.edu/faculty/revans/webct\\_files/Using\\_WebDAV.mht](http://www.ric.edu/faculty/revans/webct_files/Using_WebDAV.mht)), copy all folders and files in My Files to a folder on your local machine. Make sure the files are copied successfully by opening a few of them. This is your only copy of them, so you might want to make a backup of them in another location as well.

Once you are satisfied that you have all the files, use WebDAV to delete all the folders and files from your WebCT course. Open the folder, Ctrl+A to select all, and then press Delete on the keyboard. Confirm your intent to delete them and wait for the folder to be empty.

You have removed one of the three sets of data. Return to the WebCT course and make another backup. This one should be much smaller in size and be capable of being moved to the new semester course.

Using this new backup, move the course (see white paper titled *Moving a Course from Last Semester* at [http://www.ric.edu/faculty/revans/webct\\_files/Moving a Course from Last Semester.mht](http://www.ric.edu/faculty/revans/webct_files/Moving_a_Course_from_Last_Semester.mht)). The last step in moving the course was to clear out the old course data. This removed the second of the three sets of data. Backup the new course. Its size should be significantly smaller than either of the last two backups. This backup is the *starting course* for the new semester. Use this backup to duplicate the course for multiple sections.

## Moving the Data to the FDR

The third set of data from the course is now missing from the course. Using secure FTP (see white paper titled *Moving Files from WebCT to the FDR* on setup and using), open the instruct folder and copy the folder on the local machine containing the contents of the old course's My Files. You might name this folder xxx\_MyFiles, with xxx being the course number.

Open the new WebCT course and one at a time change the links from looking for the files in the WebCT My Files area to the URL pointing to the new location on the FDR.

When the transition has been completed, backup the completed course. Its size should be about the same as the last backup. If running more than one section of the course in the new semester, use this backup as the initiating file since it is already cleared of two out of three sets of data and has all the new links established.

As the semester progresses, use the FDR to hold all new files added to the course. Remember that the FDR is not part of WebCT, so backing up WebCT does NOT backup the FDR. Use the secure FTP program to copy the folders to another location for backup. I suggest burning them on a CD or at least, saving them on the local machine and on the P-drive for safekeeping