Introduction to Connexions*

Mark Husband

This work is produced by The Connexions Project and licensed under the
Creative Commons Attribution License 3.0†

Abstract

An overview of Connexions, the Connexions home page, and navigation tools.

1 Overview

Connexions is a web-based document creation and management system for educational and research materials. There are two parts to Connexions: a content **repository**[1] that contains these materials, and the software tools necessary to create, manage, and access these materials. The software underlying Connexions is called Rhaptos[2] and was initially developed by the Connexions project specifically for Connexions.

From its inception, Connexions was designed to allow the collaborative development and free availability of material. Instructors and authors can modify this material for any educational purpose. Connexions offers free and open source software tools to help students, instructors, and authors manage these information assets for sharing and advancing knowledge to benefit the global educational community. All of this is accomplished through the use of the Creative Commons[3] Attribution license[4] .

There are several general categories of Connexions users:

- Students - who use Connexions to access information on-line, to prepare for their classes.
- Authors - who enter content into Connexions in document files called **modules**.
- Instructors - who build **collections**, which are documents created by linking related modules together in a specific order.
- Organizations - who endorse quality content, or highlight content affiliated with their organization, in a post-publication vetting system called **lenses**.

An individual or organization may, of course, fall into more than one of these categories.

2 The Connexions Home Page

The Connexions home page (Figure 1) is the starting point for your use of Connexions. It contains the following items:

- Home, Content, Lenses, About Us, Help, and MyCNX tabs (Section 2.1: Home, Content, Lenses, About Us, Help, and MyCNX Tabs)

*Version 2.28: Jul 26, 2011 4:00 pm -0500
†http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/
[1]http://cnx.org/content
[2]http://rhaptos.org/
[3]http://creativecommons.org/
[4]http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/

- Breadcrumb Navigation Bar (Section 2.2: Breadcrumb Navigation Bar)
- Search Box and Quick Links (Section 2.3: Search and Quick Links)
- My Account and Login Sidebar (Section 2.4: My Account and Login Sidebar)
- Featured Content (Section 2.5: Featured Content)
- Find Content (Section 2.6: Find Content)
- Create Content (Section 2.7: Create Content)
- Spotlight Sidebar (Section 2.8: Spotlight Sidebar)
- Connexions News Sidebar (Section 2.9: News Sidebar)

Some of these items also appear on the other Connexions web pages.

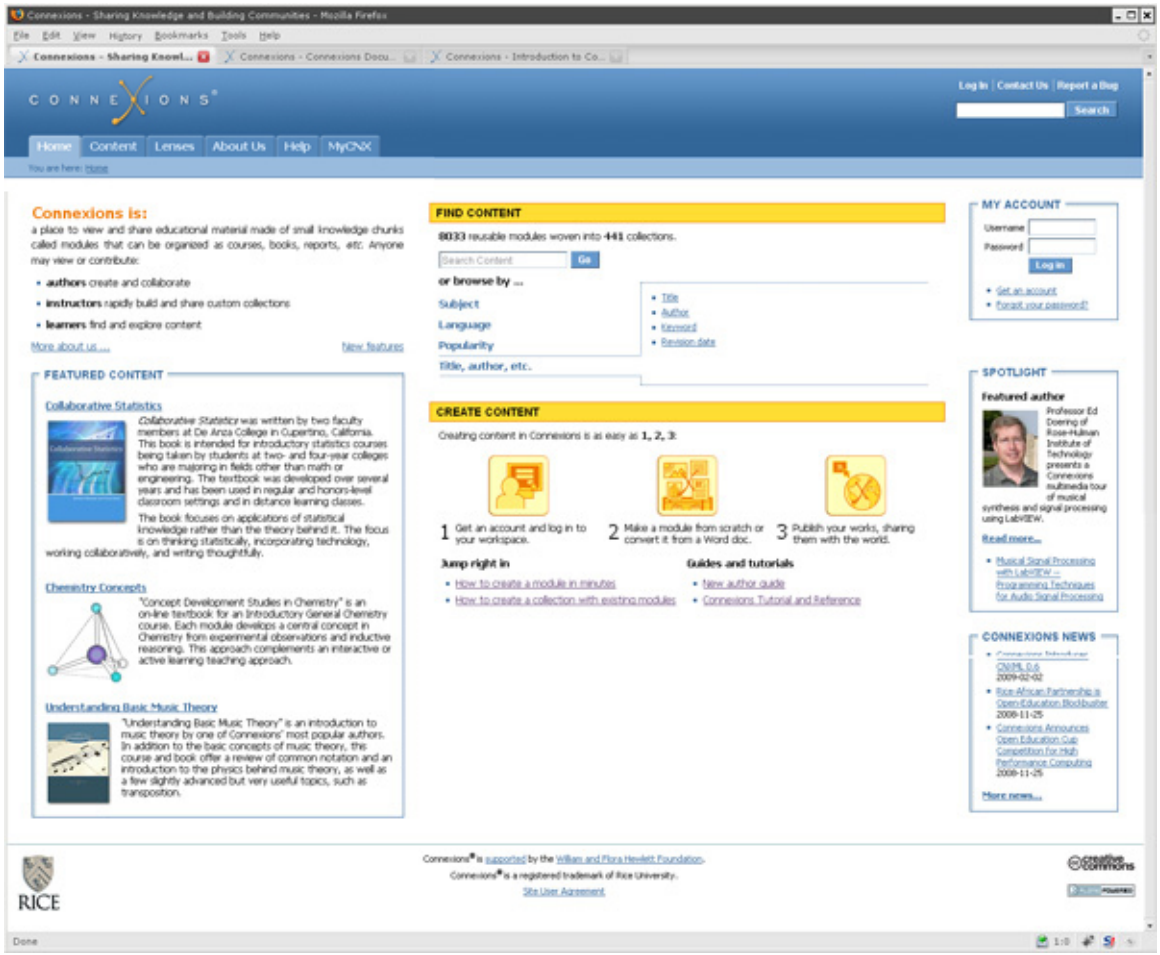


Figure 1: Connexions home page.

2.1 Home, Content, Lenses, About Us, Help, and MyCNX Tabs

On the upper left of the Connexions home page are tabs labeled `Home`, `Content`, `Lenses`, `About Us`, `Help`, and `MyCNX`. Clicking on these tabs display the following Connexions pages:

- Home[5] returns to the Connexions home page.
- Content[6] takes you to the Content landing page, where you can search[7] for modules and collections of interest or browse[8] the repository by subject, author, popularity and more.
- Lenses[9] is a portal to all user and organization-created lenses[10] .
- About[11] displays the "About Us" page that contains a general description of Connexions and links to more detailed information about Connexions, how it works, ways to get involved, the people behind it, and a list of contacts.
- Help[12] displays the "Help" page that contains links to installation, reference, and other information to answer your questions about Connexions.
- MyCNX[13] displays your member dashboard if you are signed in. This page includes links to your Work Areas, your lenses, and content you've recently visited.

2.2 Breadcrumb Navigation Bar

The `You are here`breadcrumb navigation bar (Figure 2) is located just below the main site tabs (Section 2.1: Home, Content, Lenses, About Us, Help, and MyCNX Tabs). This navigation tool is a breadcrumb trail of the Connexions pages you have displayed as you have drilled into Connexions to get to the current page. By clicking on any point within the breadcrumb trail you can return to that page.

Figure 2: Breadcrumb navigation bar

2.3 Search and Quick Links

You can search the repository[14] for a specific module or a collection using the `Search` button and text box in the upper right of the Connexions home page. Type in a name, keyword, collection title, module title, text string, or object ID in the Search text box (Figure 3) and click `Search`. Connexions will display a list of all the content that matches your entry. To view a module or collection, click on its title.

Above the search box is a toolbar with some quick links for your convenience. These links vary, depending on whether you are logged into the system or not.

[5] http://cnx.org/
[6] http://cnx.org/content/
[7] "Finding Content": Section Searching the Content Repository <http://cnx.org/content/m37430/latest/#search>
[8] "Finding Content", Figure 4 <http://cnx.org/content/m37430/latest/#browse>
[9] http://cnx.org/lenses/
[10] http://cnx.org/help/viewing/lenses
[11] http://cnx.org/aboutus/
[12] http://cnx.org/help/
[13] http://cnx.org/mycnx/
[14] http://cnx.org/content

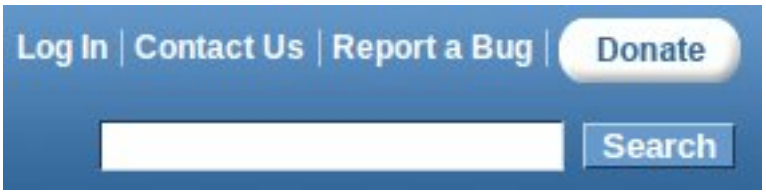


Figure 3: Personal toolbar before login

If you have a Connexions account and are logged into the system, you can perform the following actions by clicking on the links in this toolbar (Figure 4):

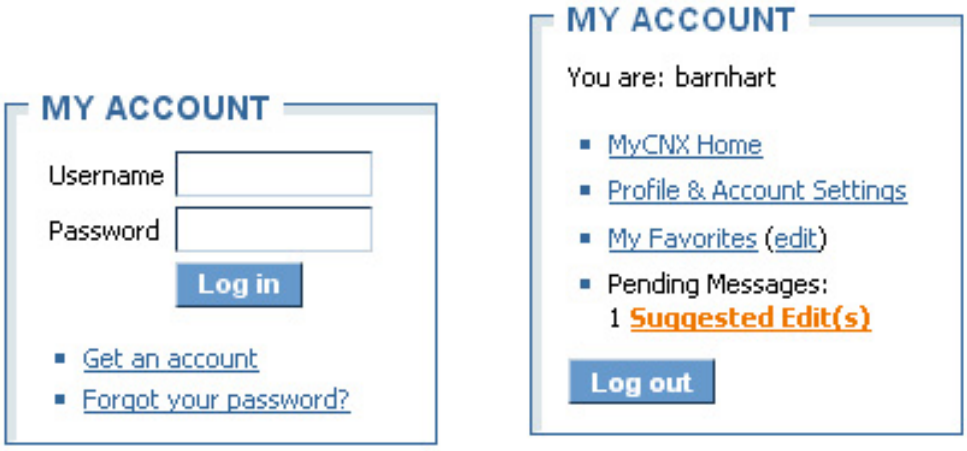
- Log in/out[15] of the system
- Contact[16] Connexions
- Report a bug[17]
- Support[18] Connexions through a tax-deductible donation

Figure 4: Personal toolbar after login

2.4 My Account and Login Sidebar

On the right side of the Connexions homepage is the My Account (Figure 5) sidebar. Its display depends on whether you are logged in or not.

[15] "Create a Connexions Account": Section Logging In and Out <http://cnx.org/content/m37412/latest/#loginout>
[16] http://cnx.org/aboutus/contact
[17] "Reporting a Connexions Bug" <http://cnx.org/content/m11836/latest/>
[18] http://cnx.org/aboutus/cnx_donate



(a) (b)

Figure 5: My Accounts sidebar

The image on the left is displayed if you are not logged into Connexions or do not yet have an account. If you have a Connexions account, you can log into the system using this sidebar. In addition, there is a link to the page for requesting a new Connexions account[19], and a link to reset your password[20] (if you forgot it).

The image on the right is displayed if you are logged into Connexions. It features links to your **MyCNX** dashboard[21], a link to change your account settings, and a link to modules that you have marked as your favorites. If you have any pending role requests or suggested edits, these will also be displayed in the My Account box.

2.5 Featured Content

The Featured Content (Figure 6) portal is located on the left side of the home page. It is used to showcase Connexions' most popular and outstanding content, ranging from math and science collections to academic lenses.

[19] "Create a Connexions Account": Section Account Requests <http://cnx.org/content/m37412/latest/#createaccoutsection>

[20] "Create a Connexions Account": Section Request a New Password <http://cnx.org/content/m37412/latest/#requestpasswordsection>

[21] "MyCNX Dashboard" <http://cnx.org/content/m10885/latest/>

FEATURED CONTENT

Advanced Algebra II

The world of second-year algebra comes alive in Kenny Felder's *Advanced Algebra II*. Felder, a high school math teacher in North Carolina, designed his course using a nontraditional approach to a very traditional subject. Centered around a Homework and Activities book, along with accompanying Conceptual Explanations and Teacher's Guide collections, *Advanced Algebra II* tackles topics by focusing on comprehension rather than straight lecture delivery.

Advanced Algebra II was selected by California's Free Digital Textbook Initiative to be included in a list of free textbooks available to California schools starting in Fall 2009.

Collaborative Statistics

Collaborative Statistics was written by two faculty members at De Anza College in Cupertino, California. This book is intended for introductory statistics courses being taken by students at two- and four-year colleges who are majoring in fields other than math or engineering. The textbook was developed over several years and has been used in regular and honors-level classroom settings and in distance learning classes.

The book focuses on applications of statistical knowledge rather than the theory behind it. The focus is on thinking statistically, incorporating technology, working collaboratively, and writing thoughtfully.

Applied Probability

Paul Pfeiffer's *Applied Probability* is a collection for college students versed in basic calculus and looking to learn about the practical aspects of probability. The course guides readers through important probability concepts such as distributions, random variables and functions, variance, and more, using problem sets and guided MATLAB examples.

Figure 6: Featured Content.

2.6 Find Content

You can start browsing Connexions' modules and collections from the home page by using the Find Content (Figure 7) portal. The `Search Content` box is used to search for keywords related to the content you would like to find.

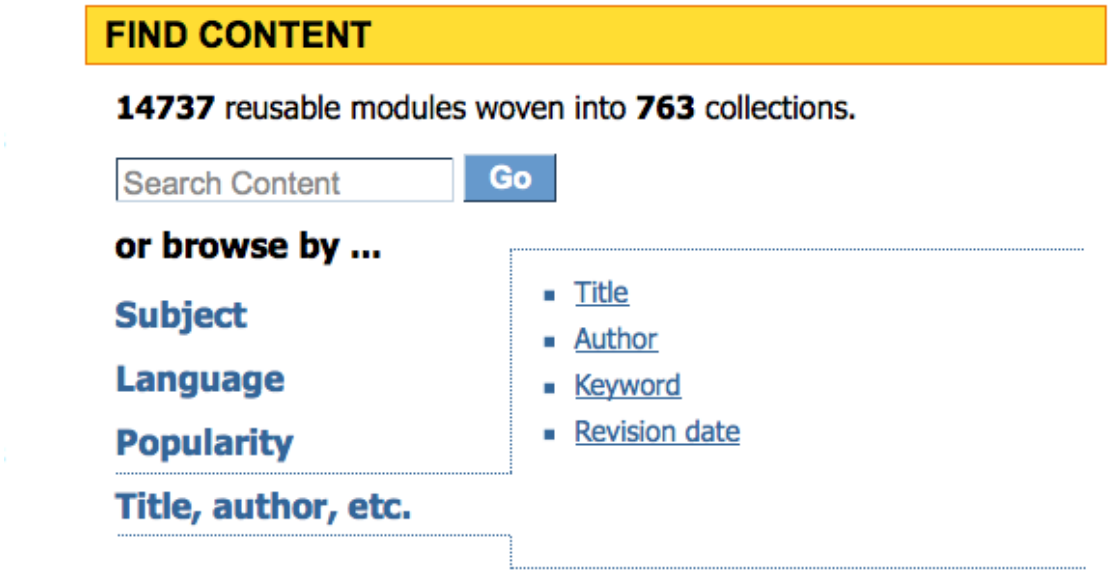


Figure 7: Find content portal.

There are also several links in the Find Content portal that will point you toward interesting Connexions content. First, place your mouse over the way you wish to browse the repository – either by Subject, Language, Popularity, or Title, etc. This will change the list of links on the right. Click on a link to begin browsing that particular selection of Connexions content.

2.7 Create Content

It's easy to get started creating content on Connexions. The Create Content portal, located just below the Find Content portal, contains links to help you begin authoring your own modules and collections.

2.8 Spotlight Sidebar

The Spotlight (Figure 8) sidebar features authors and their content, feedback from Connexions users, and events related to Connexions.

(a) (b)

Figure 8: The Spotlight sidebar

2.9 News Sidebar

This sidebar contains links to news items[22] about the latest developments with Connexions. This includes updates to the site and outside publications that feature Connexions.

[22] http://cnx.org/news/