



UNIVERSITY OF  
TORONTO

# IN THE LOOP

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES NEWSLETTER

February 2013  
Volume 1, No. 6

# GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR PROCESS



TECHKNOWFILE

**CALL FOR  
PROPOSALS**



TECHKNOWFILE CALL  
FOR VOLUNTEERS



LABOUR OF LOVE:  
DEGREE EXPLORER

**“This may be one of  
the most useful  
things that U of T has  
introduced to me...”**

# PROCESS STREAMLINING

## WHY TAKING A SECOND LOOK AT YOUR PROCESS IS A GOOD THING

As a process owner, it is without a doubt that your ultimate goal is to meet your client's expectations. To achieve this, you need to reduce the amount of time required to serve the client. So, how do you begin to examine the possible ways to remove unnecessary complexities, increase adaptability to future needs of your client and reduce bureaucracy? The answer is simple: **Process Streamlining**.

Process streamlining is defined as incrementally improving an overall process by improving or redesigning its individual steps and subprocesses.

If you take a moment and examine one task you do every day, do you feel that it could be done differently? Is there a hidden path you could take that is more efficient? Can you optimize the amount of time spent on a task in order to free more time for innovation? This is the key focus of process streamlining.

### Take the first step...

Get in touch with your process by taking some space away from it first. It may sound like an oxymoron; but consider this. Since your organization designed the

process you use; how much has changed? Do your clients have different needs and expectations now? By giving your team an opportunity to step away from being immersed in the process, the opportunity presents itself to examine how efficient and relevant that process is against the new service level expectations. Taking the time to map out how something works in order to identify gaps and bottlenecks can only have a positive effect. You either identify what you are doing is correct or you find out how to better meet your client's expectations. It's a win-win scenario.

### See the Benefits

The process streamlining methodology provides a structured approach for revisiting, reviewing and improving the internal effectiveness and efficiency of a process for the your team while also evaluating and improving its value for clients. So, what should you expect to see come out of this exercise?

Your team will be introduced to the concept of **change management**. Although this is a familiar concept to many; it is an important aspect, as making changes is difficult. That is why the

process streamlining methodology is designed to give the team involved tools and resources to facilitate the necessary transition to an improved process.

Next, your team will be challenged to **take a walk in their client's shoes**. Doing this gives your them the opportunity to take a different perspective of the process. Once this takes place, the perspective of completing tasks also changes and allows the team to refocus on the client.

Last, but not least, **focus on the process** by examining and fixing individual steps. In many cases it could be that only a few steps deeply embedded in the overall process happen to create a negative experience for the client. By separating the process with a focus on creating a positive end-result, your team can make significant impact.

In the next issue, we will discuss how **Process Streamlining** is utilized for **NGSIS projects** and review the typical timeline for this type of exercise.

*Content contributed  
by [JM Associates](#), experts on the  
process streamlining methodology.*

*Thank you.*

Front Page Image Credit: JM Associates

# TECHKNOWFILE 2013

May 9th & 10th on St. George Campus

## TechKnowFile 2013 (TKF13)

conference is here. TKF13 is an annual internal conference which showcases many of the projects and initiatives which are being undertaken by the IT community at the University of Toronto. This event has been held annually since 2000 and attracts more than 600 staff from all across the university, many are IT professionals but there are many others who use the technology provided by the university.

This year's theme is the **"BIG PICTURE"** and will bring into focus many of the technologies which are not only large in scope but those which also encompass a broad range of information and present it to a large audience. The **keynote speaker** for this year's conference will be **Paul Zikopoulos of IBM**, a globally recognized speaker who will be talking about "BIG DATA".

"BIG DATA" is a term we are hearing about more and more as the world gets more integrated, monitored and interconnected. We provide and collect data about many things either knowingly or unknowingly. The question becomes who uses that information and for what and what is the value? Paul will talk to many of these points in his presentation.

There will be many presentations from our UofT IT professionals talking about some of our larger IT programs such as NGSIS, the future of our telephone systems and Unified Communications to other smaller project such as mobile applications. Whatever the subject of the presentations may be, we believe these two days will contribute to the professional development of our IT staff and those others who care to join us for the two days.



## Call for Proposals Open

TKF13 Call for Proposals is now open. Please [visit our website](#) to submit your proposal. This year we are accepting two types of presentations: Traditional 40 minute presentations and new flash round 15 minute presentations or discussions on a particular topic. We welcome all staff and faculty to submit proposals and look forward to your submissions.

**Submissions will be accepted until March 22nd, 2013.**

## TKF Website Under Construction

Thank you for your patience while we revitalize the TKF website. New website coming soon!

## CONFERENCE DATES & LOCATION:

Thursday, MAY 9th & Friday, MAY 10th, 2013

St. George Campus University College (UC)

@TECHKNOWFILE



#TKF13

# TKF13 CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Take the opportunity to organize a great event with your fellow colleagues.



## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED...

### PROGRAM SELECTION COMMITTEE

Join this team to select presentation proposals for the conference program and coordinate with the selected speakers.

### LOGISTICS COMMITTEE

Join this team to coordinate the overall conference logistics. This team coordinates all the committee efforts and ensures the conference comes together.

### SPONSORSHIP COMMITTEE

Join this team to help the conference obtain sponsorship. TKF is a not-for-profit conference and we rely on sponsorship to continue to offer free registration for our staff and faculty.

### REGISTRATION COMMITTEE

Join this team to ensure all delegates are successfully registered and welcomed to the conference.

### A/V TECH SUPPORT COMMITTEE

Join this team to help organize the A/V and Tech Support requirements for the conference.

## SIGN UP TODAY...

It's simple. Contact us if you are interested in any of these committees.

To sign up e-mail:

[tamara.adizes@utoronto.ca](mailto:tamara.adizes@utoronto.ca)

Thank you!

# LABOUR OF LOVE: DEGREE EXPLORER GOES LIVE ON VALENTINE'S DAY

***Student Face of Degree Explorer impresses early users and student testers***

Last month, we looked at a powerful new web tool called *Degree Explorer* that had recently been released by NGSIS to administrators at the University of Toronto in the Faculty of Arts and Science and at the University of Toronto Scarborough to manage student graduation eligibility and confirmation process.

At that time, we alluded to another side of the ***Degree Explorer***, one intended for students to use in tracking and planning their degree and programs. This remarkable tool combines a student's unique program information (marks, courses taken, transfer credits) with the rules and requirements built into the application's administrative-end. The exceptions and confirmations logged in the administrative side of Degree Explorer are immediately available and visible to the student when looking at their degree assessment.

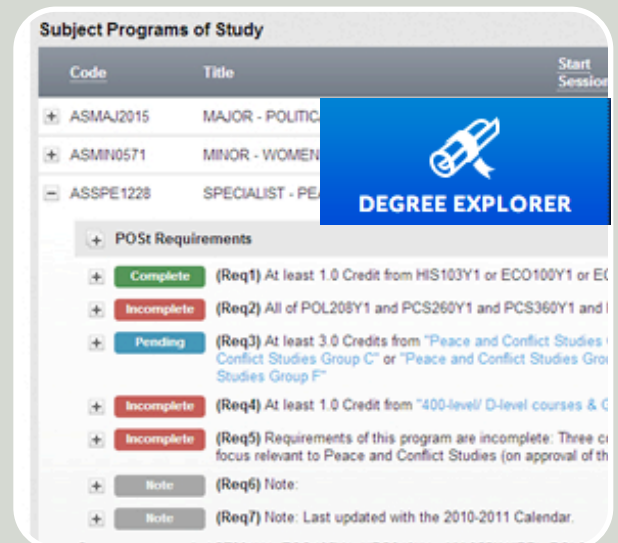
This convergence of data streams results in a tool that can tell students what requirements they still need to meet in order to be able to graduate.

Furthermore, it allows them to propose hypothetical course of study and chart out their degree. A student considering a switch in their major or minor can add a hypothetical program- and see what additional courses they'd need to pursue it (and whether courses they'd already taken were applicable).

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, the student face of Degree Explorer went live to fourth year students in the Faculty of Arts and Science, the first stage in a staggered release to all students in the Faculty of Arts and Science and the University of Toronto Scarborough.

The tool has three main features: Current Status, Academic History and a Planner.

**Current Status** displays the student's current degree and program as well as their estimated progress towards completion. Students can drill down to see all degree requirements for their program or degree and see which ones they've fulfilled.



**Academic History** allows the student to look at past courses, marks and comments as well as display advanced standing courses and transfer credits (if any).

**The Planner** enables students to see courses they have taken in the past on a year-by-year calendar and allows them to plan for hypothetical courses to take in the future. The student can use the planner to create up to five hypothetical academic plans as well as see whether they meet pre-requisites for courses they are interested in.

Degree Explorer allows students to visualize their academic trajectory in a way that was previously only possible with great amounts of paper and perspiration.

The tool proved immediately popular amongst students, at one point logging fifty unique student users within the first twenty-four hours of being online.

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One early Arts and Science student user was enthusiastic enough about the new tool to send in the following feedback:

***“This may be one of the most useful things that U of T has introduced to me. As a student who had an error in counting credits and almost not being able to graduate, this tool is super handy.”***

Several student testers noted that their favorite aspect of Degree Explorer was that it was “comforting” to be able to see if they were on track to graduate.

Degree Explorer’s lead programmer, Blair Thompson, could not be more proud of what has been achieved:

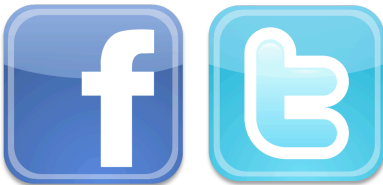
“I believe that this is the best application I’ve ever worked on. We’ve had really good people working on it, a really good team of users and testers and very supportive management. This is a very advanced application both

in terms of usability, look and feel and functionality.” Small wonder that Degree Explorer is one of the brightest jewels in the suite of NGSIS applications being released this year.



### Be social...

ITS is on Facebook and Twitter. Connect with us for the latest updates!



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### NEXT ISSUE:

March 26, 2013



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### *Fun Fact*

**Java:** Critically endangered breed. They are the oldest American breed developed from Asian stock. Used as a foundation to develop many American breeds. They are calm and are excellent foragers.

Photo and Content Credit: <http://mypetchicken.com>