

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
NOVEMBER 2, 2010
Morrill Hall Room 238A

[In these minutes: transition from WebVista to Moodle; Google applications; cloud storage; committee business]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Ted Higman (Chair), Judd Dudgeon, Pam Solvie, Billie Wahlstrom, Brent Larson, Yuk Sham, Allison Jacobsen, Paul Rubenis, James MacDonald, James MacDonald, Stephen Cawley Benton Schnabel, Bonnie Westra

REGRETS: Micah Haber, John Miller, John Butler, Craig Hohn, Mary Vavrus

ABSENT: Sue Van Voorhis, David Arendale, Aaron Doering

OTHERS ATTENDING: Bernard Gulachek, Ann Hill Duin, Chris Ament, Ken Hanna

Professor Ted Higman called the meeting to order and welcomed those present. He asked the committee members to introduce themselves.

Transition from WebVista to Moodle

Chris Ament, Office of Information Technology (OIT) Project Manager, provided the committee with a power point presentation on the transition from the Web Vista Course Management System (CMS) to Moodle. He stated that since the start of the fall semester:

- 54,000 users logged into Moodle
- 127,000 quizzes have been taken
- More than 1 million discussion postings have been viewed
- Nearly 300,000 files have been uploaded

He then discussed the governance groups involved in implementing Moodle.

- The Steering Committee,
- CMS Implementation Group,
- OIT Project Team, and
- Partners including the Academic Technology Advisory Committee (ATAC), the Information Technology Leadership Alliance (ITLA), and SCIT

Mr. Ament stated these groups are working to increase the capacity of the existing Moodle Environment, re-architect the existing environment, upgrade from Moodle 1.9 to Moodle 2.0, and migrate WebVista courses to Moodle. During the summer the OIT Project Group increased the capacity of the existing Moodle environment and this was

ready for use last August. The deadline for migrating content from Web Vista to Moodle is August 2012.

Next, Mr. Ament discussed the timeline for the project. Moodle began at the Crookston campus as its own instance, but in May 2006, it was rolled out as a centrally supported alternative to WebVista. In May 2009, the CMS Search Committee was charged with evaluating CMS usage and needs. In September 2009, the committee made its initial recommendation to support Moodle. In April 2010, the Committee recommended Moodle as the single CMS. In May 2010, OIT began work to increase capacity of the existing Moodle 1.9 environment. In August, the new Moodle 1.9 environment was rolled out with a 400% capacity increase. At the same time, planning for the Moodle 2.0 upgrade and WebVista migration began.

Professor Bonnie Westra asked why the change from WebVista to Moodle is occurring and whether or not there was student input. Mr. Ament explained that Web Vista is mandating an upgrade to Blackboard in August 2012, that there would not be a license for WebVista after January 2013 and that it would be too costly to support two platforms. He further noted that a student advisory board and student admissions groups were involved in the decision making process. Professor Higman commented that many students entering the University already have experience with Moodle and it is easy for them to use and understand it.

Mr. Ament returned to his explanation of the time line. He stated that in September 2010 Moodle size surpassed WebVista. One third of classes are being taught using WebVista and two-thirds using Moodle. In October 2010, the governance committees were formed and planning and analysis continued. There will be several months of work to migrate WebVista users to Moodle. In August 2012, WebVista will be decommissioned. Committee discussion followed about the accessibility of content after WebVista is decommissioned. Mr. Ament explained that in order to remove content, WebVista must be licensed. So, it is unclear if content will be accessible after WebVista is decommissioned. It has also not yet been determined if files archived on WebVista at the end of a semester would be available for use on Moodle. He noted that the storage and servers are physically located at W-Bob and the system is redundant.

Next Mr. Ament discussed the methodology for implementing Moodle 2.0. He stated it would be a phased approach in order to reduce the risk of delays due to integration dependencies. Phase one will focus primarily on the Moodle 2.0 software upgrade. Subsequent phases will address integration and functional enhancements. Mr. Ament noted some of the risks of upgrading to 2.0 are that the release date and feature set for Moodle 2.0 are unknown. Also there are other initiatives competing for resource availability such as the People Soft upgrade and the Graduate School realignment.

He next outlined the current status for the Moodle transition.

- CMS Implementation Group has been formed
- CMS Steering Committee has held initial meetings

- Research is being done on on-premise vs. off-site hosting. An RFI will be issued to gather additional information.
- Preliminary fit-gap analysis of Moodle 2.0 features is underway.
- Moodle 2.0 sandbox instance is available for users to try Moodle and assist OIT in learning about workflow issues that may arise.
- Moodle Website re-design is taking place. The first part was released on November 5, and it is a location for faculty to learn more about Moodle.

The next steps in the transition are:

- Complete the as-is documentation and fit-gap analysis
- Issue a hosting-RFI, review, and make recommendations
- On-going engagement of the CMS Implementation group including a “migration survey”

Mr. Ament next discussed the schedule for upgrading to Moodle 2.0. He noted that there are two competing time frames – a shorter time frame and a longer one. Points in favor of the shorter time frame are:

- Moodle 2.0 includes functionality to close the feature gap with Web Vista.
- Fewer WebVista users migrating to Moodle 1.9 and then to Moodle 2.0
- Longer migration window for WebVista users that require Moodle 2.0 feature set

Drivers favoring the longer time frame are:

- Moodle 2.0 has not yet been released (estimated December or January)
- Stability of the new release increases with time
- Impact on existing Moodle 1.9 users is unclear at this time.

Paul Rubenis asked if there are customizations for Moodle 1.9. Mr. Ament said yes, but there are questions about what will happen to the structures OIT builds within the Moodle 1.9 architecture.

Google Applications

Bernie Gulachek, Senior Director of Strategy Management for OIT, provided the committee with an update on the University’s Google Application adoption progress. The University’s adoption of Google applications began about a year ago with students. The collegiate units began their adoption in mid May and the coordinate campuses recently began the process. The process has been lead by deans, associate deans, or IT leaders. The process moves the mail off of the university servers and onto Google. This allows individuals to access all for the Google applications. Currently, over 30,000 people have adopted the Google applications. Using a document entitled “U of M Google Apps Adoption Progress,” Mr. Gulachek noted the percentage of individual who have adopted by campus. The Rochester campus has the greatest percentage at just over 40% and the Twin Cities campus is next with 40%. Mr. Gulachek also noted the graph showing adoption by campus unit. He encouraged “non-adopters” to get on board; stating that use of Google applications lowers the strain on the University’s infrastructure. The University has worked closely with Google on the application

adoption process and Google reports that it has been deliberate, steady, and climbing well but not too much at once.

Professor Westra asked when the Academic Health Center (AHC) migration to Google would occur. Vice President of OIT, Steve Cawley, responded that the analysis to determine the Personal Health Information requirement is complete, and OIT's goal is to have an AHC transition plan in place at the end of December. Migration may begin sometime after the beginning of the new year. Edward Deegan, Director of AHC Information Systems, is the leader on migrating the AHC to Google. OIT would like to have the migration completed by June 2011, so that OIT staff are not supporting two environments, and savings are realized by the end of the fiscal year. Vice President Cawley also noted that the Oracle product UMCAL would be turned off by the end of the year. He stated there is academic and financial pressure to move to a single calendar as soon as possible. Vice Provost Billie Wahlstrom asked if the Google calendar is ready for mobile devices, and Mr. Gulachek confirmed that mobile devices could be synced with the Google calendar.

Cloud Storage

Vice President Cawley addressed the committee's request for an update on availability of Cloud storage for faculty use. He stated that he and University Librarian, Wendy Lougee met with the Senate Research Committee to discuss the new National Science Foundation (NSF) data management plan requirements. Beginning January 18, 2011, the NSF would require scientists seeking NSF funding to submit a two-page data management plan that conforms with NSF data sharing policies as part of their proposals. These new NSF requirements will necessitate review of the University's research storage.

He then stated that OIT is looking at the University's research storage needs to understand the current situation and available options. Much of this work is around the library and the need to build archive storage. Presently, OIT provides storage to faculty and staff through the active directory and net files. OIT also works with faculty on individual basis to meet their storage needs. Most research data is stored locally. But, there are questions about whether this is the best or safest method, and if it will meet requirements of granting agencies.

Using a document titled "University Storage Roadmap," Vice President Cawley explained there are two types of storage. Research Storage and Enterprise Storage. The Minnesota Supercomputing Institute (MSI) manages research Storage and Enterprise Storage is managed by OIT. There are four tiers of enterprise storage. In general, reliability, accessibility, speed, and access go down with each tier of storage. For example, in tier four there is less back up, less change management, and less redundancy. It is also less expensive. Local storage, however, is still less expensive than tier four storage. OIT would like to build better storage for faculty that is affordable and meets granting agency requirements.

Professor Westra asked if there is any way to access data from the MSI and move it to the AHC? Vice President Cawley responded that there is not a solution for this yet, but the

AHC is developing an RFP to have a system built for data exchange. He also noted the importance of not disrupting research, and the need to find solutions for the expenses associated with backing up local storage. Finally, he noted that there is interest in an RFP for cloud storage solutions, but OIT must first determine the needs.

Proposed SCIT/Library Committee Merger

Professor Higman stated that Professor Kate VandenBosch, chair of the Senate Consultative Committee, informed him that an ad hoc group had been asked to look at the Senate committee structure to see if there were any redundancies or gaps. The group discussed the organization and operation of several committees, and proposed the merger of the SCIT and the Library Committee. Professor VandenBosch asked Professor Higman to seek feedback from SCIT.

Professor Higman stated that he had reviewed both committees' 21009-10 agendas, and had seen only one meeting where similar presentations were made. Vice President Cawley stated that a merger of the committees was previously proposed about seven years ago. As that time, SCIT advocated for separation of the committees, and it was recommended that there be some overlap in the committee membership in order to foster the exchange of information between the committees. Professor Brent Larson stated that a merger of the committees would cause the committees to lose their individual focus, and suggested that one joint meeting per year might be sufficient to facilitate communication between the committees. Professor Higman noted that overall, the committee was not in favor of a merger. Vice President Cawley stated the importance of SCIT to OIT as a constant point of consultation.

Hearing no further business, Professor Higman adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay
University Senate Office