

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 6, 2004

[In these minutes: UThink: Blogs at the University Libraries, Graduation Planner Project]

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

PRESENT: April Schwartz, Chair, Mark Bellcourt, Nancy Herther, Dale Swanson, Stephen Cawley, Eric Celeste, David DeMuth, Lynda Ellis, Greg Laden, Stuart Speedie, Jim Waddell

REGRETS: Jeff Johnson, Linda Jorn, John Miller, Shih-Pau Yen

ABSENT: Alan Ek, Douglas Ernie, David Hedges, Tun Jie, Michael Varian

GUESTS: Assistant Vice Provost Linda Ellinger, and John Butler Shane Nackerud, Bill Tantzen, from the Digital Library Development Lab

OTHERS: Bernard Gulachek, Myron Lowe

I). April Schwartz called on John Butler Shane Nackerud, and Bill Tantzen from the Digital Library Development Lab to provide the Committee with information on the University Libraries' new blogging system. The following information was highlighted:

- The University Libraries blogging system is available to all University faculty, staff and students.
- A blog is a web page made up of typically short, frequently updated posts, which are usually arranged chronologically.
- The content and purposes of blogs vary greatly:
 - Links and commentary about other websites
 - Information about a company, person or idea
 - Diaries, photos, poetry, etc.
- Blogs are similar to instant messages on the web.
- There are currently 4.12 blogs on hosted services. The University's UThink system is a hosted service.
- 2.72 blogs have been abandoned.
- Approximately 92.4% of bloggers are under age 30 and 52% of this number are between the ages of 13 - 18.
- Research by the Pew Research Center indicates that between 2% - 7% of Internet users have their own blog, which translates into approximately 2.5 million people.

- Examples of blogs in academia include:
 - Class blogs - <http://tiestotheland.blog-city.com/>
 - Professor blogs - <http://www.lessig.org/>
 - Student blogs
- Examples of blogging services in academia include:
 - Harvard - <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/>
 - Seton Hill University - <http://blogs.setonhill.edu/>
 - Stanford - <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/itss/projects/blog/>
- Why do scholars blog?
 - Freedom of tone
 - Speed
 - Low cost
 - Rapid publishing alternative
 - Instant peer review
 - More reach and bigger audience
 - Communication and connection/exchange of ideas
- Blogs can facilitate the education process by:
 - Helping students become subject-matter experts
 - Increasing students interest and ownership in learning
 - Giving students legitimate chances to participate
 - Providing opportunities for diverse perspectives, both within and outside of the classroom
- The University's blogging system was born from a white paper written by Shane Nackerud in June 2003 - <http://staff.lib.umn.edu/ug/uicd-blogmore.phtml>
- Goals for the University Libraries' blogging system include:
 - Fostering scholarly communication
 - Developing communities of interests
 - Giving students a voice, and recording that voice
 - Defending and promoting academic freedom
- Technical information:
 - The system uses Movable Type 2.661, Perl, MySQL, XHTML, CSS, RSS.
 - The system completely integrates with the X.500 central authentication hub.
 - Movable Type is a very personal publishing system, therefore, it had to be modified to be able to allow the system to create blog directories automatically, allow for multiple blogs per user and allow blog owners to easily attach other authors to create community blogs, etc.
 - The system instantly ties in to the myU Portal.
- Shane Nackerud created a blog and demonstrated the system to members - <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/>

III). Assistant Vice Provost Linda Ellinger provided members with information on the Graduation Planner Project. While demonstrating the system, she highlighted the following:

- Grad Planner is a system-wide, web-based planning tool for undergraduate students and their advisers.
- The Grad Planner Project is an enterprise level, web-development project that will interact with several existing student information systems e.g. PeopleSoft student record system, APAS (Academic Progress Audit System), ECAS (Electronic Course Authorization System), Portfolio, etc.
- The overall goal of the project is to help colleges, advisers and students plan for timely graduation.
- Grad Planner will:
 - Create an up-to-date database of majors and academic programs.
 - Allow students to plan their classes for their entire four years, based on this database and on the student's own record of courses already completed.
 - Let students experiment with what-if scenarios for future graduation planning.
 - Provide information for advising and administrative planning.
- The database portion of the system will incorporate all undergraduate and graduate programs on all 4 campuses. It will not, however, (at least initially) beyond the approval level, incorporate medical, pharmacy, law vet medicine or dentistry because their curricular is very different and will not fit well into how the database has been structured.

Comments/questions from members:

- Can a course approval notification feature be built into the system to avoid delays in getting courses approved? Assistant Vice Provost Ellinger noted that this had been discussed with several colleges and it was the overall sentiment of these colleges that such a feature was not necessary.
- Will the system enforce consent of the instructor? Yes, consent of the instructor can be enforced with the system; however, it is important to note that PeopleSoft will only enforce consent at one level. The level of consent chosen should be at the level where permission numbers will be issued or controlled. Also, prerequisites are enforceable with this system.
- Often the Libraries do not find out until late in the process that a new program or course is being added that will require library resources. Could there be a notification process to the Libraries built into the system? There has been discussion of creating an email list of notifications regarding new programs so there is no reason the Libraries could not be included on that list.
- When will Grad Planner be implemented? The system will be phased-in. Ultimately, the goal is to have students using Grad Planner by June 2005.
- Will students be required to use Grad Planner or will it be optional? Although SCEP would like the use of Grad Planner to be mandatory as soon as it is implemented, individuals on the analysis-side of the project are reluctant to make its use mandatory until it has demonstrated itself as a proven commodity. Ultimately, the long-term goal is to require all incoming students to have a Grad Planner on record.

- It may prove challenging to get incoming students that have not yet decided on a major to buy into the benefits of this system. According to Vice Provost Ellinger, if a student comes in undecided about their major, they will not be required to have a plan that indicates they are undecided on record. Rather they may be required to use the system to create "what if" scenarios. The system will also have a feature similar to the Microsoft Wizard, which will help students explore different majors.
- Will Grad Planner have the capacity for students to work on multiple scenarios? Yes, students will be able to work on up to 10 scenarios.
- If a student wanted to register for an entire year, would they be able to do so? Currently, there is freshman full-year registration for selected courses. The downside of freshman full-year registration is the large drop/add rate.

IV). At the next meeting on May 4, 2004 Ken Hanna will address data privacy issues and IT support guidelines. Ms. Schwartz noted that if members have other items they want on the agenda to contact Renee Dempsey, Senate staff, so they can be added.

Hearing no further business, April Schwartz adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate