COLLABORATIVE DOMAIN GROUP (CDoG) MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Friday, January 4, 2013, 10-11:30am
Hatcher Graduate Library Gallery Lab

Present:
Francine Alexander, Laurie Alexander, Sean DeMonner, Monika Dressler, Barry Fishman, Chad Hershock, Matthew Kaplan, Malinda Matney, David Mendez, Christopher Quintana, Kara Suzuka, Vlad Wielbut, John Merlin Williams

Absent:
Deborah Ball, Cynthia Finelli, Dan Atkins, Mike Wojan, Paul Courant, Susan Hollar, Chad Hershock (partial)

Agenda:
http://cio.umich.edu/governance/collaborative-documents/20130104_CDoG_Agenda.pdf

Notes:

Introduction (Barry Fishman)

Dan Atkins will continue to be involved in this committee in an advisory capacity as the founding director of the Office of Research Cyberinfrastructure. A large part of this group is to consider how we might revamp the campus ecosystem around learning and teaching at the University of Michigan. There will be a student representative on this committee. This committee is part of an emerging coordination effort that can have a strong voice and provide solid guidance in informing University investments, decisions and technology assessment processes. It is not a decision-making committee.

Alliance Working Working Group (Chad and Susan)

This is a multi-university (Indiana, Wisconsin, Northwestern) collaboration to determine a process to evaluate educational technology, however U-M will play a less active role in coordinating across universities.

This subcommittee will be developing ways for U-M to evaluate technology tools at a variety of stages to development to determine whether and/or how to use them in the classroom. Piazza (found in CDoG Learning Innovation Alliance folder) can act as a pilot tool to test assessments and workflows. Plans to pilot in winter term, with outcomes produced around May. This evaluation will include interviews with students and analytics gathering to determine what is useful (or not) about the tool specific to U-M community needs.

There’s a need for a more rapid evaluation that is useful across campus due to the proliferation of tools and fast user testing is needed to keep pace. This can serve as an incubator for how
different types of technology evaluations can work across campus. It’s useful to ITS to help determine if a tool is worth investing in, or to evaluate how tools are adopted and used across campus. This model can/should be shared across other units, e.g. a reproducible protocol. For example, use and evaluation of tools can be used as a mechanism for funding and to understand better how we can use evaluation across services.

Susan and Chad have developed a flow chart that maps decision making processes in evaluating tools.

A key consideration in this evaluation is how to connect with units, individuals (departments or faculty) across campus who may be interested in using the tool or evaluating it. Communication, for example putting out a call for evaluation, will be useful. Understanding better or developing communications channels across campus may also be necessary to establish. Part of this is a funding consideration: how do people apply to get an evaluation, who are the right people to evaluate tools, etc. One option is that evaluators becoming part of a permanent service to the campus.

*Strategic Planning Working Group (Laurie, David, Monica, Sean, Matt)*

The IT council is working on a strategic plan across domains, knowledge and learning and teaching. It should be finished by June and representatives from this working group have a meeting with Laura Patterson to align our work to theirs.

This group is still sorting out the level of specificity, for example, how to make sure to get input or reaction to tools (not do evaluation in a vacuum). There is also outreach to be done at the service leadership level (leadership and middle management representation) about this work, another group launched in relation this specific part of the IT Research strategy. It includes a mixture of units (e.g. Medical School, Pharmacy, Housing). Laura Patterson is a ‘client’ for this group.

Student input is a critical piece to all of these planning processes. Mike Wojan can serve as a conduit for this as he serves on the LSA student government body.

Review the “mapping the landscape” documents in Google docs because these align with the strategic planning working group’s focus. A goal of this working group is to understand better and facilitate knowledge transfer across campus, for example what do we need to know about learning and teaching on campus and the role of technology to facilitate knowledge transfer (currently pockets of activity are isolated across campus units). This subgroup met in December 2012 to think about what might be on this map, what questions would be asked about this landscape, who are the clients and what is the output we might create?

Review the service pyramid model as a useful way to think about the provision of IT services on campus. Units of measurement: universally valued technology seen as a community good (MPathways, CTools), coalitions of units who have adopted specific tools (shared poll services,
video conferencing), other individual groups or faculty who are using unique technology and negotiate per use case for funding. IT moves up and down this pyramid.

A future step is to convene a subgroup that will feed into the strategic group that focuses on the service pyramid model?

The way IT is funded on campus is changing, in the future there will be more visibility for the cost to units for maintenance of IT infrastructure, services, and support (e.g. CTools). We’re now in a transition period in which we’re running both funding models (transparent and traditional) in parallel to see impact.

This group is poised to affect funding decisions (for example, to move more tools from the coalition status to community good status). These are informed by our domain scans.

Update: Connected Learning Workshop (John Merlin Williams)

Intended to be a small, local workshop on Design Lab 1 research conducted by the USE lab. USE lab folks have gathered some information on technology, programming, user input changes and the way the space has evolved over time. Initially they were going to offer this workshop to a small group has now escalated to a library-wide, campus focused workshop and this group CDoG may sponsor the workshop.

This is an emerging area of interest by faculty, but not yet at a scalable stage. “Connected Learning Environment” means different things to different people across campus right now. Steve Lonn and Linda Knox will facilitate a larger discussion around this. Connected Learning also takes into account the Atkins Four Quadrant model.

Chris Quintana has experience in using DL1 and started the Brandon Center in the School of Education. He can use these experiences to help host what might be a ½ day workshop on connected learning.

A larger goal for this workshop is to jump start the community at U-M around connected learning and to help understand better how these spaces are used. Next Thursday will be the first meeting to discuss the workshop. Could be hosted in winter, probably mid-to-late March. This event could also be an information source for other activities.

Echo 360 update

This is an example of the evolution of a tool (e.g. LectureTools) that has had a lot of focus and is the type of tool this committee should know about.

When LectureTools was first developed and used by Perry Samson (LSA) it was to make large classroom instruction more engaging and interactive. Now it has expanded into lecturebooks, e-textbooks. It was funded on an a la carte basis on the community model (it is not an example of
a community good). LSA is paying the licensing fees. ITS (until November 2012) negotiated licenses through the end of the winter 2013 term. LectureTools is now integrated into CTools but there is no signed contract because Echo purchased LectureTools and renegotiations began with U-M.

U-M could potentially help to continue development of LectureTools. Echo 360 has proposed three offers to U-M, 1) LectureTools; 2) Echo system; 3) Active Learning (both LectureTools and Echo system) with incentives toward the third option.

This is an example of the need for larger input from the community about this contract and an evaluation of the tool that can inform the community and university. It also affects the group in IT Commons which submitted the proposal for Lecture Capture (Vlad is involved in this group).

The Alliance group may be responsible for evaluating Lecture Capture in the future. No one is aware of any current Echo 360 tool use on campus. Echo 360’s vision for the product is for LectureTools to be used as an in-class tool and for Echo system to be used out of the classroom (e.g. before and after) class time. Their product strategy is unclear but may feature more LMS features in the future.

What role might Active Learning play in U-M’s LMS future?

How do we manage systems that are already in place and in use (e.g. the Business School uses Mediasite, LSA uses LectureTools, Camtasia is used, Engineering has its own in-house system). Echo 360 is admittedly “late to the game” and there are pricing considerations. It’s hardware based and doesn’t have all the features used across campus. LectureTools is one of many tools, regardless of whether it was developed in-house initially.

Perry Samson has asked to install Echo 360 for his classroom use, LSA is treating this like other faculty requests on an ad hoc basis. If used by others, LSA will consider piloting it and evaluating it. This is an example of where a campus wide evaluation would be useful, especially in considering costs (for example School size and classroom needs).

There is known resistance from faculty when being told to use a new tool, especially if it may replace an existing (used) tool in the classroom. In light of this, it’s important for the University to make informed decisions, not based on vendor pressure. It’s also important to figure out a process for evaluating tools like these as they become viable classroom options and to give U-M control in expressing their needs to vendors (for example needs versus features).

This term’s integration of LectureTools into CTools without a contract with Echo 360 must be addressed.

It’s also important to continue to support innovations and home-grown solutions (like LectureTools) to education technology needs. For example, when does campus support homegrown apps or software or treat it like an external tool?
Must also consider hidden costs, for example staff support, for ad hoc and institutionally supported tools.

*Dearborn Report, LMS Search, Francine Alexander*

This was a needs-based study, values and principles were implicit in the review.

Dearborn has four academic units, fewer resources, especially in IT and especially in academic environment support. Each unit was running a separate LMS (450 faculty, 9000 students): CTools, WebCT/Blackboard, a homegrown system in Engineering and “MedSped” in Education. Students often move across units, but faculty do not.

The driver of this study was the College of Business. It was using WebCT/Blackboard and they will no longer have LMS support after this summer (2013). A need emerged at Dearborn to rationalize LMS use across each academic unit, and to the extent possible, align with the the LMS use on the Ann Arbor campus.

Francine convinced the Business School to wait for this study to be conducted before independently choosing an LMS for their needs. They developed a parallel process with all four units that included a team of faculty and a few students (admittedly this study was weak on student engagement). A feature of the study was to find a tool that is primarily a tool for academic learning environments as faculty are the major clients for this tool.

The study communicated through distributed channels, calling on the deans of the school to be information conduit to participating faculty members and students. Two explicit needs for the tool were to provide learner analytics and data warehousing.

Communications among faculty about pedagogy, teaching techniques and informal tool introductions were an unanticipated benefit of this study. Cost was not discussed until after faculty conversations and interviews took place.

In late September, the associate deans met to discuss the study and to communicate to their faculty about it. In early October through late November, vendors were invited to campus. Vendor behavior during these demos were a major indication of type of technical support the campus was likely to receive. There was a strong consensus on vendor choice across the four academic units.

During this time, the study group reached out to groups doing assessment to understand how they might align learning outcomes with an LMS search and decision. The assessment team involved provided additional information to the primary and secondary clients. Primary clients were instructors based in online learning (with the highest functional demands for the tool). If these needs were met, it was assumed the secondary clients (primarily in-person instructors) would have many of their needs met.
After the vendor demonstrations, Dearborn set up course shells and sandboxes for faculty to test each tool. They engaged in activities related to the classroom needs at Dearborn.

The study engaged three of the four academic units at Dearborn, excluding Engineering. The School of Engineering will abide by Dearborn’s LMS decision.

This study and the discussion of appropriate teaching tools acted as a lever to connect faculty to each other. Now faculty are more engaged in reviewing and understanding a variety of tools for education.

Canvas (http://www.instructure.com/) was chosen as the LMS for Dearborn. The College of Business will start using Canvas in July and the College of Engineering will also start to use the tool soon. Arts, Sciences and Letters will stage their use of Canvas. Dearborn is using cloud-based services instead of hosting it themselves.

There was overwhelming support for Canvas on the campus, however Dearborn is still very interested in aligning this use with Ann Arbor’s next LMS and IT rationalization.

Wrap Up

This study illustrates the importance of community input, especially from students. However, input from users must be managed effectively (don’t create a cacophony of irrelevant input). This group should attend to developing a structure and guiding principles/values for such a discussion with the community.

An open or closed platform was not a priority for Dearborn but a customizable platform (more than less open) is a priority of the Ann Arbor campus. In addition to the user input, discussions of pedagogy and learning capabilities are also important to consider in choosing an LMS.

We must also consider the pace of changing technology with regard to how we manage the service pyramid on campus. Next generation/IT rationalization efforts are driven by taking over a common layer of infrastructure (e.g. networking and storage) to free user innovate. For example, School of Public Health already uses a lot of cloud-based services and products.

In open source discussion, sharing data, tools, and information across campuses is very important. Any LMS the Ann Arbor campus chooses needs to be customizable or appendable with new, different tools or functionality.

In accepting the changing pace of technology and the changing landscape of education, our recommendations needs to articulate how U-M approaches this change effectively. David should ask Laura Patterson about this when they meet.
It’s never too early to start collecting data around accreditation and assessments, especially with regard to 2017’s activities. This group must consider how various systems that collect student data (for example, measuring evidence of learning within student organizations) can be connected in meaningful ways. In this respect, open source tools are important.

We must also consider services to support a faculty transition to using new systems. User feedback is not just getting feedback but learning what happens when evaluating tools. Additionally, we must not only focus on what we can measure, but what is outside of our current measurement systems (like non-instrumented spaces, informal peer-based learning environments).

The demo/sandbox part of the study is very useful, similar to rapid prototyping, and this should be incorporated in our studies or engagement with the community.

With regard to platform architecture, we must consider how well a platform can be sustained and extended, for example it needs to be standards-based and respects modification. An approach based on environmental needs, rather than tool-based features will allow us to address some of these issues. For example, imaging a federated system that is openly licensed will allow us to address changing technology and learning needs.

Our current approach is not sustainable in terms of maintenance. We can barely maintain baseline functionality with Sakai. We will probably be running Sakai for the next year but not five years from now.

When Sakai was initially chosen, it was important for U-M to “own” its LMS system. This may not be a requirement in the future. Most of our resources are supporting commodity-based services today. We have started to shift to support value by adding vertical services and our expectations for federated services continues to expand (e.g. moving toward a ‘seamless’ system that connects administrative information, alumni information, learning information and research information).