

Campus Responsibilities for Course Management Systems

Summary of the Concurrent Discussion Session May 26, 2005

Discussion Leader: Suzanne Thorin, Indiana University Bloomington

Blackboard, WebCT, Sakai, and locally-developed course management systems (CMS) are in use on campuses of the nearly 40 participants that contributed to the discussion. Suzanne Thorin, Indiana University, opened the discussion by providing a brief background on the development of Sakai. Sakai is a framework for collaboration in the classroom or laboratory initially developed by Indiana University, University of Michigan, and MIT.

Purdue and Georgia Tech are working with their integrated library system (ILS) vendors to enhance the link between the ILS and the CMS. Nebraska is working to link its electronic reserve system to BlackBoard and is also testing the Safe Assignment plagiarism software. Southern Illinois, Duke, and Oregon are among the handful of libraries responsible for managing the CMS. These three have centers for educational technology in their libraries that manage the CMS implementations. At least for these, the library is seen as a trusted partner. For most other institutions IT departments manage the CMS.

James Hilton, University of Michigan's interim library director and an active Sakai participant, noted that Sakai and its Sakai Educational Partners Program (SEPP) may be a "credible threat" to the commercial CMS vendors. SEPP now numbers over 70 partners as many institutions want a choice that has interoperability and one whose vision is more tailored to higher education. Additional information may be found at <http://www.sakaiproject.org>.

Rutgers is typical of some campuses in the deployment of WebCT and Blackboard and has recently become a Sakai partner. Marianne Gaunt noted that Rutgers wants to place content where students work.

Libraries are just beginning to explore where to store learning objects. Cliff Lynch, CNI, noted that most learning objects are being stored in MERLOT (<http://www.merlot.org/Home.po>) or national repositories rather than in the CMS. Stored learning objects seem to have minimal reuse. Sakai plans to develop the capability to pull content from institutional repositories.

James Hilton noted that much of the Sakai development is grassroots, but the Sakai framework encourages development based on application programming interfaces (APIs).

In response to a question of whether portals would evolve into course management systems, several participants commented that their library portals were just one channel on the university portals. Others expected portals and CMS implementations to remain distinct.

Use of electronic reserve systems is increasing at a number of institutions and there is growing use of content management systems, both of which may influence future directions of course management systems.

Cliff Lynch noted the different cultures that manage course management systems, content management systems, and institutional repositories. The challenge is to get the right communities to talk about the interoperability of these systems. Cliff noted the challenges in long-term storage of commercial content. Who should fund that commercial content, and who should negotiate the licenses? Another set of adjacent issues is the textbook pricing rebellion and whether that will result in students moving away from buying textbooks and institutions licensing content to be used in the CMS. Follett is one publisher selling content to be integrated into the local CMS. Several agreed with the comment that in the future the pathway to get to library content will be through course management systems and Google Scholar. Purdue and York are two of the institutions that have had campus departments ask the library to take over licensing of electronic content. The session concluded with Jim Mullin's quip that the Purdue Library's licensing of content for the Business School will help Purdue's ARL statistics.