My Gateway at UM-St. Louis

The My Gateway online course management system (using Blackboard) was introduced here at UM-St. Louis at the beginning of Fall semester 2000. My Gateway provides students and faculty with access to course materials, and a variety of programs that enable classroom communication and interaction using virtually any computer with a current web browser (such as Netscape or IE 4.0 or higher), and an Internet connection. Every course offered at UM-St. Louis is provided with an online My Gateway site, and every instructor and student is automatically provided with access to the courses they are taking or teaching.

We are quite pleased with the enthusiastic response the My Gateway system has received from both students and instructors. Over 298 instructors and 6300 students used the system during the winter semester in 333 courses. This fall (as of Monday, August 27, 2001), 326 courses are active in My Gateway with 303 instructors, and over 7000 students. We expect these numbers will increase as the semester moves along. Results of the My Gateway Faculty and Student surveys from FS 2000-WS 2001 are available for review at http://www.umsl.edu/computing/mgwhelp/wd10survey.htm.

Students use their “Gateway ID” and password to sign on to the system (see http://gateway.ud.umsl.edu). Instructors use their single sign on (SSO) ID and password to access the system. For both students and faculty, this ID and password combination can be (and in the case of new students, is) synchronized to provide simple, convenient, and secure access to all of our campus’s online services.

Students can access the My Gateway system from one of hundreds of workstations located throughout the campus in 8 locations, including the new Library Research Commons with over 65 workstations, and the newly opened Millennium Center’s Cyber Café. All-time faculty have desktop computers in their offices, and the use of thirty-two Internet equipped classrooms (eleven with up to 56 student workstations, and two lecture halls with seating capacity of up to 250).

All students and faculty are provided a campus based email address that is automatically programmed into the My Gateway system. This email address is both secure and accessible to students and faculty via a wide variety of on and off campus utilities, including a web-based email interface that allows faculty and students to access class email from virtually any location on the Internet.

The My Gateway system enhances interaction in classes regardless of their format: traditional face-to-face, or totally online. It provides students and faculty with a degree of flexibility that allows them to access class materials at times and places of their own choosing. My Gateway also provides a consistent structure and organization for course content across the many different classes that a student may be taking.

The My Gateway system also provides instructors with the ability to track the use of specific documents, as well as the use of the entire course site. This allows instructors to further refine their presentation of online course materials, as well as assist students who appear to be having difficulty with accessing essential course materials.

In these ways, My Gateway empowers students to learn independently and to enjoy one-on-one interactions with instructors, devoid of face-to-face anxieties. Moreover, the systempermits to students with weak skills to seek additional individual attention and interaction, while stronger students can spend their time on more advanced aspects of the course material. All of these support elements insure continuity in a student’s online educational experience.

Beginning in WS 2002 we will be bringing online the newest version of Blackboard, version 5.5. Level 3 to power the My Gateway system. The latest release of the Blackboard courseware offers many improvements for faculty and students, including a web-based email program that will all users to access all their email from within the My Gateway system. This new version will also provide departments, campuses, and programs with space to run their own My Gateway web sites.

Contact blackboard@msx.umsl.edu for additional information on using My Gateway in courses at UM-St. Louis.

Robert O. Keel

Limits of Information Technology

Information Technology - The use of computers and telecommunications for the processing and distribution of information in digital, audio, video, and other forms.

Moore’s Law (Gordon Moore, cofounder of Intel) - The observation that the amount of information storable (read also, processing power) on a given amount of silicon has doubled roughly every 18 months. This relationship has held since the late 1970s. When Moore first proposed this in 1964, the doubling period was 1 year.

Information Technology planning often seems to be based on the assumption that Moore’s Law can be generalized to some sort of universal truth that applies to all areas of IT. However, we do not have to look very far to see that this is not the case. Of particular interest today is the area of wireless data communications. Put simply, when can we expect to be able to pull the wall plug on data connections? The best-case answer is, not for a good while! The reasons are similar to those that has caused radio to remain wireless while television went to what is now mostly wire-based delivery.

Wireless comes in two flavors, local and mobile. Local involves a base station attached to a wired data network. The base station provides communication between nearby wireless devices and the network. Reasable data transfer rates can be achieved by local wireless, but these technologies are limited by what is meant by the word “nearby.”

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Telephone Services

Of note are several changes that impact the campus. As of October 1, 2001 all AT&T calling cards will be deactivated. This is due to the new long distance contract that begins on the same date as Qwest.

If members of your staff need a new or replacement calling card please contact Chris Boyer at ext. 5582. Calling cards are needed if anyone is traveling and wishes to call back to UMSL since incoming collect calls cannot be accepted.

Don Boehnker

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Editor’s Comments

This edition of iterations features one of the units within ITS, namely Faculty Instructional Support. FIS is the result of efforts combining services from the campus computing and ITC to directly support teaching and research by faculty.

The north and south campus Faculty Resource Centers are now both administered within FIS. In addition to the self-help functions in multi-media production, scanning and imaging from handcopy or electronic originals, we have added faculty development, instructional design and training services. More details about these services can be found in the articles to follow. Please note that much of the training activities are being done in collaboration with the Center for Teaching Excellence. If you have need for services that are not currently offered through FIS please contact me at ext. 6172 so that we can discuss how to assist you. I trust that you will find this issue of iterations informative.

Don Boehnker

Chris Boyer at ext. 5582. Calling cards are needed if anyone is traveling and wishes to call back to UMSL since incoming collect calls cannot be accepted.

Don Boehnker
Limits of Information Technology (Cont’d)

Mobile wireless, cell phone like, Internet communications represents the real objective, WWW, the World Wide Wireless Web. Here the jury is still out. Of course there is no reason to believe that Moore’s Law, whose domain is the microscopic, has application to the macroscopic world of telecommunications. In fact, there is a fundamental law that does apply. Claude E. Shannon’s Theorem – states that the maximum amount of data that can be transmitted through any channel is limited by available bandwidth and the signal-to-noise ratio. Thus, to achieve reasonable data transfer rates one needs and adequate portion of the radio-frequency spectrum, an expensive proposition. Further one needs a reasonably strong signal to overcome the atmosphere’s noise. This presents engineering and regulatory problems that are perhaps even more daunting. What is the proposed outcome of this investment? Today’s cell phones operate at about one third the speed of a computer modem. Third Generation (3G) wireless expects to operate at speeds that are much faster than modems, in the range of DSL. But, it is far from clear that there is enough demand for such a service to justify the expense and, in particular, the associated cost to users to recover expenses. Moreover, UIM – St. Louis desktop connections operate at approximately 100 times the speed of the fastest proposed 3G wireless service. Thus, one expects that here, we will see only targeted use of this new technology for some time.

Jerrold Siegel

Flashlight Online - Another Web-based Teaching and Research Tool

Do you have a research project that involves remotely located or far-flung populations? Would you like to use a web-based survey to evaluate the electronic and world-wide resources you’re adding to your course designs? Then, Flashlight Online is an evaluation tool that you might want to consider.

What is Flashlight?

The Flashlight Evaluation Project is coordinated by the Teaching, Learning & Technology Group, an affiliate of the American Association of Higher Education. Flashlight Online enables web-based surveys. The instruments are developed online with pre-designed structural formats depending on the question type. The “Current Student Inventory” consists of a collection of 500 indexed questions for use in creating your own surveys, interviews and focus groups. The questions are statistically reliable and grouped by the following categories:

- Educational Strategies
- Teaching and Learning
- Teaching, Learning and Technology
- Student Satisfaction
- Self-reported Learning Outcomes
- Experiences with Technology
- Technology Sophistication
- Student Academic and Demographic Items
- Retention

Participants can access the surveys via the World Wide Web. As individuals complete the survey, their responses feed directly into a database on a secure server. There are both faculty and students’ security measures in place. Instructors or project leaders can view the frequencies as the evaluation proceeds. The data is downloadable to a local database for further analysis, as well.

How Might I Use Flashlight in My Teaching and Research?

An example of one research project is the “Science Cooperatives: Effecting Local Systemic Change in Rural Missouri and Iowa.” Len Annette, part-time lecturer and full-time graduate student in the College of Education, first learned of Flashlight at an early meeting of his committee. Assistant Professor Joe Polman mentioned that UMSL had a site license for the teaching, learning and technology survey inventory from which...

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Flashlight Online (Cont’d)

he might draw questions for a multi-state project he was coordinating. This National Science Foundation project (with James Shymansky as Principal Investigator) is a 5-year science teacher inservice program. New science units and associated topics (e.g., assessment, cross-curricular teaching, and working with parents) are offered via interactive video and face-to-face meetings and link the 37 participating schools districts in rural Missouri and Iowa via cooperative regions. K-6 science teachers are recruited to participate for a minimum of two years. They may choose 8 programs from a field of 24 sessions each year to earn graduate credit. Part of Len’s job is evaluator for the inservice program, which are primarily delivered via IVF. He was looking for a systematic evaluation method easily accessible to the teachers. Flashlight Online provided both the format and the inventory of questions he needed.

What are the benefits he sees? “The advantage of using Flashlight Online as opposed to a generic “pencil and paper” form or a form generated program is that I can have multiple users participate in the survey from a vast land area and get results instantaneously,” comments Annetta. Moreover, Flashlight provides frequencies of responses so I can get a feel for the perceptions of the participants [and improve the next IVF session based on their comments].” He concludes that the second year of the Science Cooperative program has been improved based on the evaluation conducted and outcomes noted. “The second year is nothing like our first - we’ve learned so much!” Annetta will be presenting papers at both the Association for the Education of Teachers in Science and the National Association for Research in Science Teaching this fall. His dissertation research will resume via Flashlight Online as the NSF project continues.

How Others Are Using Flashlight

What follows are brief descriptions of several departmental evaluation and planning initiatives. Please contact Dr. Cheryl Bielema for names of the authors or investigators in charge of the evaluation. The College of Nursing has used Flashlight to survey their students at the end of the semester in courses delivered by IVF. Each course has a unique URL for the surveys. College of Education faculty members were surveyed as to their technology experience in a baseline investigation by the Technology and Learning Center. A sample of UMSL students has been surveyed regarding My Gateway use in their courses each semester since fall of 2000. Either face-to-face or online surveys are offered to their instructors as the better means to reach students. Results of the evaluation have guided both faculty and student support decisions by Information Technology Services.

Optometry students were involved in the school’s self improvement and long-range planning process last year via Flashlight. Information Technology Services maintains the site license for Flashlight Online. If faculty members or their graduate students would like to know more about the Flashlight Online program, please contact Cheryl Bielema, Instructional Development Specialist [email bielema@umsl.edu or phone 314.516.7134]. She is available to help plan program evaluations for interested groups, departments and colleges, as well.

Cheryl Bielema

Instructional Computing (Cont’d)

Instructional Computing computes the student computer labs, the Advanced Technology Classrooms and provides audio visual support for the open classrooms on campus. Our staff supports everything from the hardware and software your students use, to the bulbs in the overheads in each classroom.

Some important updates, upgrades and policy changes for Fall 2001:

http://www.umsl.edu/technology/instructionalcomputing

New Classrooms

The following rooms have been converted to technology enhanced lecture halls with an instructor station, vcr and overhead data projector. We have modified these installations to include easy laptop connectivity:

- Benton Hall 102
- Seton 6
- SSB 215
- University Center 1
- University Center 2
- Training is held each semester for faculty who are teaching in our classrooms. Call x852 for your site or visit our website for scheduling information.

Hardware Upgrades

- Classroom instructor stations upgraded to Gateway PIII 933’s, with CD and Zip
- Benton Hall 232 Lab: PC’s upgraded to Pentium III 1000 mhz systems, with CD and Zip
- Social Sciences 103 Lab: All PC’s are now Gateway PIII 1000 mhz, with CD and Zip
- South Campus 200 Lab: All PC’s are now IBM Pentium II 300 systems, with CD and Zip
- Smart Board is now available in SSB 133
- New ITV technology in SC102

Software Installation & Upgrades

We have installed, or upgraded, over 30 new software packages in the labs and classrooms. Most notably, we have upgraded the labs and classrooms to Office 2000. The complete list is of new software is available on our website.

For Winter 2001, we will be upgrading all PC’s to Windows 2000, so future software purchases will have to be Windows 2000 compliant. The deadline for Winter Semester software requests is October 12.

Due to the volume of AV requests, the diversity of equipment requested and the logistical planning required, the following policies went into effect the first day of Summer semester 2001 (May 21, 2001).

These new policies allow Instructional Computing to increase its on-time delivery as well as better meet the needs of the Faculty we serve. We are asking your cooperation in their implementation.

The following items are available for put-out to classrooms:

- Overheads
- TV / VCR combination units
- Slide Projectors
- CD-Player (Boom box)
- MIPS carts
- Microphones (for lecture halls)

The items above are put-out into classrooms by student staff on the days they are requested. When the class period is over, the items are collected by the staff and returned to storage.

The following items are available for check-out from our office:

- DVD Player
- LCD Projector
- Camcorder
- CD-Player

At no time will Instructional Computing check-out equipment to a student (graduate or undergraduate). Instructional Computing will not make equipment deliveries, so if you wish to check-out equipment, you must come by the office in order to pick up, and sign for, the item(s).

Due to limited resources, check-out time is limited to one week, unless approved by the AV/Classroom Supervisor (e.g. requester is using the camcorder during a two week conference out of state.) Reservations for equipment put-outs will be taken between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm [continued on page 8]


What’s New with the Faculty Resource Center?

The Faculty Resource Center is always thinking of better ways to provide efficient and effective service. One of the ways we plan to accomplish this is by making the same services available on both north and south campuses. The current area of concentration on south campus is instructional development, while north campus focuses on providing the services needed for faculty to create the end product. While both of these are important services we feel joint collaboration is needed to integrate the various needs of faculty/staff members who utilize the FRC. Our staff is in process of cross-training in order to make this happen. The purpose of this training is to make sure we are accommodating faculty and staff members while diversifying our services to accommodate emerging needs.

New Staff

The Faculty Resource Center has two new staff members. Paul Wilmarth is the new Department Assistant and will be dividing his time between north and south campuses. Although new to the FRC, Paul is not a new face to the campus. You may know him from ITC and more recently as the Audiovisual Supervisor for Instructional Computing. Kenneth Ng has been hired to cover evening hours at the north campus FRC. Kenneth is a junior and his major is MIS.

Audiovisual Equipment

Speaking of Audiovisual you can now find audio-cassette recorders, tripods, camcorders, data projectors and overhead projectors in the FRC on North Campus. The equipment is loaned out not to exceed a duration of 5 working days and is available by check-out only based on availability. To view the Audiovisual schedule please visit Outlook and you can find the schedule by selecting Faculty Resource Center and choosing the option titled “Equipment”. To make sure this schedule stays accurate we ask that the equipment be brought back on the expiration date. This will ensure the availability for other faculty/staff members who wish to check-out the equipment. If you have any questions or to reserve an item please give us a call at (314) 516-6704.

Policy Changes

The Faculty Resource Center has also made changes to the existing policies regarding how work is handled on both north and south campuses. Current policy is that the facilities are open for walk-in use.

• Most services and equipment within the two facilities are intended for primarily faculty/staff self use.

• Work requested of FRC staff will have a minimum turn around of one week.

• In order for the staff to provide better one-on-one assistance and to better manage equipment availability we strongly encourage users to make appointments for use of equipment and staff assistance.

Current policy is that there is no cost for using anything in the FRC/SCFRC, with the following materials to be supplied by users:

• Customers should supply their own transparency materials and 35mm film. Film can be purchased at the bookstore.

• Scanning of class related materials without charge will be limited to 50 pages per person per week. Scanning in excess of this amount for non-class related materials will be at 50 cents per page payable by IDO only.

Enhanced Courses

Starting Fall Semester 2001 the Faculty Resource Center will provide ongoing enhanced training sessions each semester. Please see listings to right for current course offerings. If you have any suggestions on courses you’d like to see us offer please e-mail them to frc@umsl.edu. Your input is encouraged.

Jennifer Spearsman-Simms

VPN Service Now Available to Faculty and Staff

Due to the increasing amount and sophistication of computerized vandalism on the Internet, the Campus network is isolated from the outside world. Through the use of a firewall, the network is protected against several dozen attempted break-ins every day, keeping data safe and avoiding the hassle and frustration that accompany security incidents. Unfortunately, security comes at the cost of convenience, and vice versa. Keeping unwanted outsiders off of our network also means that off-campus University users will not be able to access the Campus network and its resources. With the growing number of DSL, cable modem, and non-University dial-up (such as AOL, Mindspring, etc.) users, there has been an increasing desire to provide services, without resorting to endangering our users and their data.

To address this issue, ITS now offers VPN services to faculty members. VPN, an acronym for Virtual Private Network, is a network technology that allows outside users to connect to our Campus network and interact with network resources as if the user were physically located on the Campus network. Additionally, this connection is secure, which means that all communication between the user and Campus is encrypted.

For more information, please contact Tom Kyle, tkyle@umsl.edu, in Network Services, or Ken Gleeson, gleeson@mx.umsl.edu, at the Technology Support Center.

Tom Kyle

Instructional Computing Updates and Audio Visual Changes (Cont’d)

Monday through Friday. Reservations for equipment check-outs will be taken up to 5:00 pm each day. Reservation requests made after 5:00 pm will be considered as made the following day. So if you need a TV/VCR for your classroom at 10:00 am on the 15th, you will need to reserve that equipment on the 14th before 5:00pm, else we will not be able to guarantee availability or delivery.

We will accept equipment requests via telephone (at extension 6852) or via email sent to av@umsl.edu. When requesting any equipment (either for check-out, or put-out) you will need to provide the following:

• Faculty member’s name
• Faculty member’s department
• Contact phone number
• Building and room (for put-outs)
• Date needed
• Either: time needed (for put-outs) or

noteworthy news

Interactive Television Classes (ITV)

In the Fall Term 2000, ten classes were offered between ITV classrooms on the UMSL campus and remote sites. Of these, six originated at UMSL. This fall term there are thirty ITV classes offered. Twenty-one classes originate at UMSL/St. Louis. New origination classrooms have been installed in 102 and 107 SCOB.

Disability System

A new application was written to support Disability Access Services. It automatically obtains instructors and generates letters to instructors concerning an individual’s needs. Deployment is scheduled for 2001.

Beowulf Center

In the first seven months of this year, researchers at the University of Missouri-St. Louis have accomplished the equivalent of 9.1 years (on a single 1GHz Pentium II processor) of computations. A new application was written to support Disability Access Services. It automatically obtains instructors and generates letters to instructors concerning an individual’s needs. Deployment is scheduled for 2001.

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