

iterations

Busy Holiday Break

Over the holiday break, ITS accomplished many tasks to deliver a more useful, stable and efficient computing environment. ITS staff worked extra hours, early mornings, nights and weekends and made a strong effort to perform the more disruptive tasks during off-peak hours. Some of the tasks are listed below:

1. Upgraded Blackboard Transact System to enable real time door monitoring and credit card services.
2. Upgraded MyGateway to enable better response times and load capacity.
3. Single Sign-on servers upgraded to assure more reliable failover in case of single unit failure.
4. Helped get ITE's cluster, Primo, back up after they had air-conditioning problems.
5. Technically cleaned all PC computers in the Labs and Classrooms approximately 1100+ systems.
6. Removed VCR's from 14 classrooms.
7. Updated 9 classroom monitors to 1909 Wide screens for compatibility with new video projectors.
8. Successfully applied patches to the various components of the Nortel phone system.
9. Set up new phone circuits for the new food service contractor.
10. Prepared for the ShoreTel voice-over-ip telephone pilot (that has now started).
11. Software patching was completed on all Windows, Linux & Solaris servers providing security patches and vulnerability updates to improve stability of the servers.
12. VMWare was upgraded to the most current version to provide additional features within our virtual server environment.
13. Tested disaster recovery failover of the core network.
14. Updated the Intrusion Prevention System software to improve vulnerability scanning.
15. Upgraded all core, server and building network switches, providing security patches and vulnerability updates.
16. A new UPS was installed for the Bookstore network, to provide temporary power backup in the case of an electrical outage.
17. Migrated to a new file storage system to provide redundancy, fault tolerance, and higher availability as the new storage system is capable of mirroring data between both data centers to reduce single points of failure.
18. Several services were moved to the new storage system, enabling failover to the other data center in the event of a data center failure; services included: faculty & staff mail, SQL databases (ArcGIS, DialVision, TickeTrak, MicroMain, MDID, Secure File Shares, Print Quotas, Remedy software license managers, VMWare), Oracle databases (web applications using Coldfusion, degree auditing (DARS), MyGateway, student financial aid, PeopleSoft, MyView, institutional reporting and research), faculty & staff Unix files and web server content served by www.umsl.edu, faculty & staff My Documents and departmental shared drives, and student .
19. Preventative maintenance and testing in both the Lucas Hall and Express Scripts Hall data centers was performed for fire suppression systems, UPS, and backup generators.
20. The Benton Hall 232 lab was refreshed with new carpet and paint.
21. South Campus Computer Building 200A classroom was upgraded to a new Polycom video conferencing system, wide screen projector and SMART Symposium, control system, and LCD displays.
22. Music Building 225, Bellerive B12, and SSB 126 auditorium were all converted to stick classrooms.
23. South Campus Classroom Building 201, Mark Twain 218, and Benton 101 were all upgraded with new widescreen projectors, control and audio systems.
24. SSB 133 classroom was upgraded to include video and audio archiving equipment.
25. A SMART Symposium was installed in Marillac Hall G08A classroom.
26. A new casual learning space with 2 kiosk computer stations, and a table and chairs for group collaboration were installed in the corridor on the fourth floor connecting the SSB and Tower buildings.
27. Student Exchange email servers were turned off on Friday, December 31. Students should have migrated to Microsoft Live email by this time and will no longer be able to access their older Exchange-based email accounts.

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New Virtual Private Network (VPN) Hardware

On March 16, 2011 a new VPN server will be placed into production. This new server makes use of newer technology, is more user friendly, and supports a wider variety of operating systems. VPN services provide remote users a way to connect to an office system from home (using the Remote Desktop Protocol) or access a SAMBA drive.

New VPN software will be necessary to access the new VPN. Instructions for downloading the software and using the new VPN can be found at: www.umsl.edu/technology/networking/vpn.html. The existing VPN hardware will be turned off on March 16, 2011.

Questions concerning this announcement can be forwarded to Ken Voss.

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Voicethread: Bringing Conversation into a Presentation

What is Voicethread? First, it's a free online zoom-capable slideshow tool for organizing and delivering images, videos, charts, or other digital files. Second, it's a place for students to review those contributed files and leave comments in line with the slideshow. The Voicethread keeps the content central and allows for very simple collaboration and discussion around the edges of the image, video, or chart. Students don't need to click away from the content to leave a comment; they add to the conversation while listening to and reading others' contributions. Best of all, it is very easy and, dare I say, fun to use, even for tech-phobic students.

How does it differ from a discussion board? For starters, Voicethread is more like a group audio blog than a discussion board. The slide is at the heart of the Voicethread flanked by comments on the left and right. The collaboration tools are below. Students can leave voice feedback, text-based notes, webcam videos, and annotations on top of the digital media file using the built-in tools with relative ease. As people leave their comments, a small icon (avatar) appears around the frame of the slide. Anyone who visits the Voicethread can listen to the original presentation, listen to others' comments and questions, and then contribute something to the conversation. After all is said and done, you can package and embed the whole presentation and comments right within your MyGateway course!

How can you use Voicethread with your students? A quick conversation with me can get you started, but here are some ideas to get those creative juices flowing!

- You can take a PowerPoint file and put it directly into Voicethread; record your comments, and ask students to contribute or ask questions.
- You create a Voicethread to introduce a difficult concept – students can conjecture about what the key questions or topics might be about the subject.
- Students can practice giving an in-class presentation in Voicethread, and then comment on other students' presentations to give feedback on ways



to improve their presentation. Their in-class presentations will be better informed... hopefully!

- Students upload a graph or chart of data they've collected, and group members share analyses.
- Students can reflect on what they've learned by creating a reflection Voicethread. For example, students can share their experiences from a service-learning opportunity.
- Students can teach a difficult concept in a Voicethread to other students in the class.
- Are students struggling with learning HOW to answer a problem in your class? You can take your students step by step through how to approach a problem in a Voicethread, and students can ask or answer questions at each step.
- Use Voicethread to conduct collaborative review sessions. You could upload a problem to be solved and see how students approach the solution.
- Upload a video clip and ask your students to discuss the video.
- Share a sample of writing and ask your students to comment on the choice of phrase.

Voicethread is extremely flexible and can provide the framework for many kinds of classroom interactions: student-to-student and student-to-teacher. To learn more, visit: www.voicethread.com or contact Keeta Holmes in the Center for Teaching and Learning.

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Annenberg Learner

Annenberg Media's Learner.org site provides educators with professional development and classroom resources that span the curriculum. Annenberg Learner furnishes multimedia courses and workshops to assist educators with teaching strategies and updated research on topics in their field. The Teacher Resources link allows you to search disciplines and grade levels to find specific programs that meet your needs and your students' needs. The Annenberg site also includes student interactives which contain online tours of topics ranging from geologic formations to the collapse of ancient civilizations.

Instructors can create links in their course content areas to these resources (under "External Links"). You will want your browser configured to accept cookies from Learner.org. If you're coming to Learner.org through MyGateway, you will need to make certain that your browser is configured to accept third party cookies. Viewers will receive a request to sign up for the "video on demand" cookie. Accept this request and you will have access to a wide range of the site's features. (If you have questions/concerns regarding setting your browser to accept cookies, please contact the Help Desk at (314)516-6034.)

Try accessing videos directly by typing this link into your browser's address bar: www.learner.org/resources/browse.html, and then select the series you want to view. (If you're experiencing a problem while using Internet Explorer, try downloading and using Firefox instead.)

Annenberg Media's Learner.org site is a source of information and activities that can enhance the teaching and learning experience. The URL www.learner.org/faq/faq_broadband.html contains answers for basic "getting started" questions.

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Instructional Computing News

We are happy to announce there are a few new stick rooms available for the Spring 2011 semester. Bellerive 101, B12, and SSB 126 are now outfitted with Instructional Computing imaged Windows 7 instructor stations and data projectors. Music 225 also now has a Macintosh instructor station and projector. These rooms can be scheduled for classes by working with your department and the Office of the Registrar. In addition to the new stickrooms, the Benton Hall 232 student computer lab was renovated with new carpet and paint.

Have you considered teaching via video conferencing? If so you would be interested in learning that South Campus Computer Building 200A,

was renovated with a new HD Polycom video conference system, document camera, Smart Podium, and wide format displays.

For more details on any of the above, visit us on the web at: www.umsl.edu/technology/instructionalcomputing. Orientations, support, or reserving the rooms for one time use for the Instructional Computing classrooms can be provided by contacting us at ic@umsl.edu or 314-516-6852. We hope you have a great semester!

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No More Snow Days

It is Tuesday morning and you walk into your 9:30 a.m. class and notice half dozen empty seats. You wait several minutes before starting class hoping more students will show up as you are taking attendance. It must be the weather, you say to yourself, realizing that some students must have stayed home due to the snowfall last evening. Sure enough you receive at least three emails on your BlackBerry from students who could not attend class because several school districts were closed and they were at home attending to their children. Since there is a lot of material to cover prior to the first exam you proceed with course objectives for the day and decide to work with absent students during office hours to get them caught up. While walking to your office after class, you run into a colleague and mention that several students were absent due to the weather. Briefing the colleague on your plans to hold longer than usual office hours, they respond by recommending Wimba Classroom.

The scenario described above may sound familiar to many of you especially during the winter months in St. Louis. Please remember Wimba Classroom is a technological solution that can keep you connected in situations which prevent students from coming to

class. Wimba is a live, virtual classroom environment with robust features that include audio, video, application sharing and content display, along with MP4 capabilities. Its pedagogical design and ease-of-use ensures that educators and students engage as if they were meeting face-to-face.

Advantages of using Wimba include:

- Real time interactive audio and video interaction with the class
- Course content can be pre-recorded or recorded during class
- Sessions can be archived and used throughout the semester (great use of the tool for review of content!)

In addition advanced features such as polling, whiteboarding, presenter on-the-fly, resizable chat areas and participant lists, usage analytics tools, and MP3 or MP4 downloads enable further dynamic interaction between students and educators.

Interested in learning more? Please contact the Faculty Resource Center (FRC) for an individualized consultation or to discuss setting up a departmental workshop.

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Wimba Classroom Tips: Good Practices

When using the Wimba Classroom tool in MyGateway, consider when you are creating a Wimba Classroom you are prompted to enter in a name for the classroom. A good practice is to use the same naming convention that one may see in the course schedule or what is used in MyGateway. For example for Accounting 2400 for Spring semester 2011 could use ACCTNG2400-SP11 as its Wimba Classroom name. One could add additional naming information after this course identifier like "ACCTN2400-SP 01 Monday Evening Class." Keeping it unique is important because one could create multiple classrooms with the same name that could add to confusion later when trying to find specific information found in Wimba Classroom session(s). Another benefit of using this naming convention is that when recorded archives of classroom session are completed the classroom name and date of recording are created and posted automatically to your recording list (ACCTN2400-SP11 - 01/31/2011 21:00). The date and time you started the archiving recording is added to your Wimba Classroom name.

One does not need to create a Wimba Classroom for each session meeting time. One can create a Wimba Classroom and create content

folders in Wimba for either each session's material or for each topic covered in the course. When one wants to either review a past topic or past lecture material in class, one may find it useful to go to that folder during the live classroom session. Another advantage is reusing Wimba Classroom and its created content folders for future semesters. For more information on developing content folders in Wimba Classroom contact the FRC.

For intermediate and advanced Wimba Classroom users who are featuring streaming movie clips during a live online Wimba Classroom session, you may want to instruct the student, to use the Check (yes) indication tool after the movie has ended. This will give you the instructor a visual on when the whole class has watched the movie before asking probing questions about the movie or moving on to the next material that your planning to cover in class.

For more Information on Wimba Classroom and possible training opportunities, feel free to contact the Faculty Resource Center.

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Office 2010 Cool Features/Possible Issues

Office 2010 has been around for a while now. Some users on campus have it now and many users will be getting it soon. It does have some very nice features and I am sure there will be articles in the future to highlight them. Personally, I love that you get the File menu back that they removed in Office 2007.

One feature people are talking about is the ability to save documents directly to SharePoint and web shares. This feature is both cool and worrisome. I love being able to dump files directly into SharePoint and as more and more departments are getting SharePoint sites, this is going to save time and cut down on duplicate documents.

I also like to save personal files out to my personal web space. In Office 2010 you can save personal documents straight out to your Microsoft SkyDrive if you have a Windows Live account. It is a little clumsy and slow at first but works. You may notice that I keep saying "Personal" documents because University or official class documents are required to be stored on University systems per current University policy. Storing documents on University storage ensures backup and disaster recovery for those documents and protects intellectual property. You do not get these benefits from SkyDrive.

Be careful though, once you save to SkyDrive it defaults there as a save location. It is easy to accidentally save to the wrong place and accidentally share your SkyDrive files out to the world making them public. As you can imagine, that would be very bad with University or student data. So, feel free to make use of these new features for your personal files, but do so with care.

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Data Center Changes

The services provided by data center operations staff have drastically changed over the past 10-15 years and no longer require traditional services such as running batch jobs, managing large print jobs, active monitoring of systems and changing tapes. Many of these services have been replaced by automation or are simply no longer necessary. Given the current economic climate and ITS's need to significantly reduce operating expenses while maintaining critical service levels to the community, ITS has transitioned Data Center Operations to a more economical "lights out" automated operation. If you have any questions regarding these changes please feel free to contact [Ken Voss](#).