

LMS Team Meeting

12/11/09 from 10:30am – 12:30pm

Room 941 Tech Center

Members present: Karen McPhaul (presiding), Dave Sorenson, Susan Horton, Janice Stuart, Becky Roehrs, Tracy Mancini, Steve Leadon, Brent McCardle, Charlene West, Megan Nicholson and Peter Wooldridge. Attending visitors were Tom Murphy and Luke Gwaltney (student).

Blackboard Presenters

Bille Dorsey, Solutions Engineer at Blackboard, Inc. and Danielle Kern, Client Services Representative at Blackboard, Inc. joined us by via a web conference to provide an overview of the new features Blackboard 9 and NG (Next Generation).

Factors that shaped the changes in Blackboard:

- Economic uncertainty
- Unprecedented choices
- Global connectedness

Blackboard hopes to engage diverse learners.

What is Bb NG?

Blackboard's new Learn System is based on engagement, openness and assessment. Bb NG is incorporating the best features from their acquisitions (WebCT, Vista, Angel) into Bb.

BBb NG Timeline

- Bb9 is available now
- Bb9 is the first major step toward the new vision called the Project NG roadmap
- Bb9.1 –working on this version and should be available in 2010
- Additional Application Packs – provide updates as needed
- BbX – 1 to 2 years out

Features that have NOT changed from Bb8 to Bb9:

- Textbox Editor
- Performance Dashboard
- Adaptive Release
- Grade Center
- Discussion Board
- SafeAssign
- View/Complete
- Assessments
- Course Statistics

Features that have completely GONE away from Bb8 to Bb9:

- Digital Dropbox (View/Complete will take it's place)
- Student Home Pages

Features that HAVE changed or added from Bb8 to Bb9:

- Blogs (new feature)
- Journals (new feature)
- Contextual Menus (new feature)
Contextual menus have been added to several places at the course level so instructors can add or edit content from the main course page. A lot of the receipts and clicking OK have been replaced by these menus.
- Onscreen reordering (drag & drop) of items from the main page (new feature)
- My Instructor Dashboard (new feature)
The My Instructor Dashboard allows instructors to get a quick view of their courses in one place before going in to a particular course. Instructors can customize the page the way they want by adding modules.
- Student Dashboard (new feature)
The Student Dashboard allows students to get a quick view of their courses in one place before going in to a particular course. This is one way instructors can relay course updates to students.
- Notification System (new feature)
The new Notification System allows instructors to automate the sending of "event-driven" messages to students. Instructors choose the way students can receive info (Student Dashboard – new, Email, RSS). One concern is that the new notification system hits the Blackboard database's resources hard and could bog down the system. Admin will see a significant increase in the time that it takes to copy courses from semester to semester.
- Wikis (new feature to be added in 9.1)
- My Places (new feature)
This seems to replace the student homepage, but we didn't get a clear answer about whether or not students can view other student photos.
- Groups (enhancements)
- Control Panel (enhancement)
- The Control Panel has been changed to allow instructors to access course options from the main page by expanding the menu.

Blackboard Partners

Blackboard has developed partnerships with third party companies to provide resources such as NBC Archives. Participants were interested to find out that at the basic level, only a snippet of the video was available, not the full video. As Bille described, many of these third-party enhancements are "free to a point," offering only a taste of the features—to use them fully requires additional costs.

Tools

Several tools were listed on the Tools page however some are not ready for production. We were told that Wimba Pronto Basic (chat tool) is free for unlimited use and also includes a voice chat feature that 2 people can use at a time for free. Several other tools were mentioned. We need clarification on usage and pricing for all tools before moving forward.

Follow Up

We asked for more info about if Google Doc and Calendar will integrate with Bb9.

Team Discussion

- Team members voiced concerns over response times for students with older computers, software and browsers
- The yearly Blackboard licensing fee includes all updates and support during that year
- Karen, Tracy, Megan and Susan attended the demo sessions given at Duke on 12/10/09 and provided info about the sessions. Tracy commented that one of the faculty presenters from Kettering commented that he really likes the drag and drop features of Bb9. Karen added that the instructional technology presenter's top 3 favorite things about Bb9 were:
 1. Less clicking! The receipt screens and OK buttons are gone
 2. The work flow is better. Instructors can build content on the main page from the contextual menus. A separate Control Panel is no more.
 3. From the Admin side, more control of customizing the way Blackboard looks.
- Peter asked if we've seen anything that would make us to want to stay with Bb.
- Steve suggested weighing the cost of Moodle add-ons vs. what is included in Blackboard. He also likes what he saw about the Bb9 interface better than Bb8 and Moodle.
- Brent wonders about Blackboard's ability to make changes to the product quickly to respond to user needs. It looks like Bb9 is playing catch up but has Blackboard thought ahead?
- Karen added that it could be time consuming to cull through the available tools and find the best ones for Moodle. We would want Moodle to be "stable" without tools changing constantly.
- Members were frustrated with the parts of the demo noting that it was difficult to determine features of Bb9 vs. those features that might be available in the future. Members were concerned that the presenter didn't disclose the fact that the free version of the online NBC Archives only included a snippet of the video, not the full video. Others wondered what other features might have hidden costs.
- Members felt that faculty might not use a lot of the new tools because of the time commitment involved in learning and using them.

Next Steps

Karen would like Team member spring schedules before break so she can begin planning meetings for spring. She will send out an email with more details about our next meeting.