Minutes of the Academic Information Technology committee  
7 October 2003

Present: Greg Anderson (Chair), Vijay Agrawal, Joe Benz, Nanette Hogg, Dustin Kozal (student representative), Robert Walden, Deb Schroeder,

Absent: Janet Wilke (Interim library director)

Guests: Darren Addy, Martha Kruse

Meeting was called to order by Kruze at approximately 3:00 PM

Martha Kruze, as a member of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, called the meeting to order, welcomed the new members of the committee, and thanked the continuing members of the committee for their service. She then read the charge to the committee, and asked for nominations for chair and secretary. Anderson and Benz agreed to continue in these roles. Kruze then wished us well, and excused herself.

The next order of business was to decide on next meeting date. It was scheduled for November 4, at 2:30 in the library conference room.

Schroeder then distributed handouts from Syllabus magazine on Tablet PCs and “blogging” for the edification of the committee. She wanted to know if there are faculty who are interested in using either of these technologies for their classes. She also spoke briefly about e-portfolios for students. This is a service where UNK would provide disk space and a software program so that students could keep a record of their work, especially multimedia work. Schroeder’s question was whether students would be interested in this, the consensus was that they would, especially if the software made it easy to do.

Darren Addy then made a presentation on survey software. This software would be for general purpose research use, and well as evaluation of instruction. Addy presented a list of desirable features (below) that a product should have. Discussion of this issue was wide ranging. Hogg asked about the adequacy of currently-licensed software such as Blackboard (Bb) or Brownstone (edu). Schroeder replied that, for various reasons, these products were less than satisfactory. Addy requested that those with a vested interest in the software decision indicate this to him; he would appreciate their help on evaluating different programs. The committee thanked him for his presentation.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Benz
Evaluating Web-based Survey Software

I would appreciate it if you would look this over and let me know which of the criteria you think should be more (or less) important. Also, if there are criteria that we should add to the list, please let me know. If you happen to think of something later, my email address is at the bottom of the page.

a) **Give users the ability to create their own surveys.** This is partly a software issue, and partly a licensing issue. Some products (like Dragon Web Surveys, charge for each person that will be actually creating the surveys). To keep our cost down, we purchased a one user license which means that I set up all surveys. After we saw how large demand was going to be for web-based surveys, we suddenly saw the importance in user’s being able to create their own surveys.

b) **Cross-platform:** We need a product that will work for both Mac and Windows users. Personally, I don’t understand it, but it’s 2004 and people still insist on using Windows computers.

c) **We would prefer a product that does not require a program to be installed on each user’s computer.** This adds to the cost in both money and time installing, upgrading and supporting such installations. There are products out there that are browser based, or Java based that will run with nothing more than the web browser you already have on your system. In otherwords you use your web browser to create surveys and view the responses and reports.

d) We would like the survey to be capable of **logical branching.** On paper surveys, you have probably seen things like this: “If you answered ‘yes’ skip to question 12.” On a web-based survey, that skip would be automatic. The user would not even see the intervening questions. Another example might be a Pet Store survey where it asks you if you own a dog or cat or both. If you own a dog or both you proceed to the next section of Dog questions. If you answered “cat” you skip the dog questions and go directly to the cat questions.

e) We would like a product that we can **administer on our own server.** There are web-based survey company’s out there that offer survey hosting, but we feel for many reasons that a product that we house and administer will give us the most security and versatility and cost effectiveness. The server platform that the software runs on is somewhat of an issue, although our department administers Windows Servers, Linux Servers and Mac Classic and OS X servers.

f) **Another issue is the database that the product can use.** If the server component only works with the Microsoft SQL Server database, we must factor in that cost when evaluating it (currently a minimum of $2500 for SQL Server alone, on a single processor machine).

g) **Flexibility of the product in reporting and exporting survey data.** Some users, as mentioned before, require SPSS formatted output. Others want to be able to use the data in a spreadsheet.
h) **Web browser compatibility issues.** Since the user (and hopefully the survey creator) will both be using a browser interface, we would like the product to work in a similar way with the various web browsers out there. We wouldn’t want someone attempting to take the survey using Netscape or Mozilla user to have a different experience than an Explore user, for example.

There are a number of other features that MAY be found in the Survey Software. These range from “important” to features “that would be nice”. They are listed below under the appropriate heading:

**Survey Management**
- Save and continue later: Respondents can save their progress and resume where they left off later.
- Monitor results in real-time
- Control Access to the Surveys: Require authentication (username/password) or make them available to everyone

**Response Management**
- Eliminate duplicate submissions (using either UserID or browser cookies)
- Collect demographic information on the respondents
- Display instant results (let the respondent see instant results, once they submit their survey
- Customized “Thank You” pages
- Email respondents a thank you email.

**Analysis and Reporting**
- Multi-variable filtering: Filter on multiple questions using and/or logic to narrow the results and analyze the data by segment.
- Summary and advanced statistics reporting
- Flexibility in data export formats

**Miscellaneous**
- Ease of use for the survey creator
- Ease of administration for the server administrator
- Ease of use for the respondent (breaking the survey into multiple pages, graphs showing what percentage of survey is completed, etc.)

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