Meeting Notes from 4-5-12, 2:30 pm, Weir Hall Room 104

Members Present: Penny Rice, Maurice Eftink, Kelly Wilson, Debra Riley-Huff, Tamar Goulet, Jimmy Ball, Wayne Shaw

Guests Present: Denis Goulet - Biology

Clickers (Audience Response Systems)

6 years ago, in 2006, this committee chose to support a standard clicker on campus. The committee chose PRS by Interwrite. At the time, this was the clicker that was the most widely used on campus. We were very satisfied initially. Then, in late 2007, eInstruction purchased Interwrite. In early 2010, Julie Weiss (our account rep) left Interwrite and James Maddox became our sales rep. Since the buyout by eInstruction, instructors and FTDC support staff have become increasingly dissatisfied with this product.

Reasons for Dissatisfaction:
   • Software updates not reliable. Introduced too many bugs.
   • No new Mac software updates released.
   • As software was updated, began to see problems with connecting to receivers.
   • New USB receivers unreliable, many failures.
   • New sales rep had absolutely no knowledge of the PRS RF clickers.
   • Heard through a competing clicker vendor that eInstruction was dropping support for the PRS clickers.

This spring, a few weeks into the semester, the rep called to say that eInstruction was not producing any more RF clickers and that they could not fill our bookstore's order. We scrambled to find enough clickers to supply our students with for this semester. Many students had to borrow clickers from friends or order a used clicker through Amazon's Marketplace. This prompted the Faculty Technology Development Center (FTDC) to begin investigating other clicker options.

The FTDC staff gathered information from several of the major audience response system vendors and had them contact various instructors on campus to set up in-class demos for the Spring semester. Rice presented the strengths and weaknesses of each to the committee.

Turning Technologies

Strengths:
 • RF Clicker with numerical entry and LCD display
 • Provide a cell phone option in place of the clicker device
 • Windows version of the software integrates directly into PowerPoint

- Provide a Blackboard building block that gives students a means of registering their clicker through their Blackboard course. The instructor can then sync the clicker software to Blackboard and upload graded clicker session responses into Blackboard directly via the building block.
- Alphanumeric answers can be entered via the clicker (keypad arrangement similar to standard cell phones)
- USB receiver is small—about the size of a flash drive.

Weaknesses:
- Mac software does not currently integrate with PowerPoint. They should have a Mac version of the software available sometime this summer.

iClicker2

Strengths:
- RF Clicker with numerical entry LCD display
- Provide a cell phone option in place of the clicker device
- Offers to work with school to develop a custom Blackboard building block for integration of clicker data into Blackboard
- Alphanumeric answers can be entered via the clicker
- Clicker shape and size

Weaknesses:
- Software does not integrate with PowerPoint.
- Entering alphanumeric and numerical data is not intuitive on the clicker.
- USB receiver is not small like other vendors' receivers

Top Hat Monocle

Strengths:
- No software installation necessary

Weaknesses:
- Cell phone based only, no dedicated clicker device option
- Software does not integrate into PowerPoint
- Internet connection required in order to collect responses
- Software is not intuitive to use.

The committee then discussed how to proceed from here. Several options were mentioned.
- Bring in software reps to demo their clickers to the committee: The committee decided that since the FTDC staff had already done this earlier in the semester and summarized the strengths/weaknesses for the committee, that this step was not necessary.
- Ask instructors who have been using the various clicker types this semester to meet with the committee and discuss their experiences.
- Seek text based responses from the instructors about their experiences and not meet with them in person.

The committee voted not to consider Top Hat Monocle since it had the least options. Everyone agreed that inviting the instructors that have been piloting Turning Technologies and iClicker to a committee meeting would be the best way to gather feedback. Rice will send out the invitations, and we will plan to meet again next week.

Classroom Technology

Rice then gave a brief history of the Classroom Technology project. Eftink reported that funds are available to continue the project this year. Rice will send out requests to department chairs seeking their recommendations. Requests for both classroom technology and wireless network installations will be considered. The committee will meet again in a few weeks to review the requests.

Blackboard

J. Ball reported that a Blackboard upgrade is being considered for this May to resolve issues with newer Web browsers. The committee agreed that it is frustrating to be required to use older browsers to connect to Blackboard and that an upgrade to fix this issue is highly recommended. The consensus was that this upgrade should be performed now rather than waiting until the usual December upgrade period.

Ball also gave a report of the status of the Angel to Blackboard course conversions that are taking place as Outreach shifts from Angel to the campus-wide Blackboard learning management system.

Rice and Ball both discussed the need to clean up old courses in the Blackboard system. Ball proposed that we archive and remove from Blackboard any course older than 3 or 4 years. The consensus of the committee was that we keep a minimum of 4 years worth of course data. The Blackboard staff will being this cleanup of old courses some time this summer.

The meeting was dismissed at 4:00 pm.