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Benefits of Integrating the Library Reserve Function With Blackboard

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Background

When the University of Vermont College of Medicine moved their curriculum to the Blackboard Course Management System, no provisions were made to integrate electronic reserve materials with Blackboard. Knowing intuitively that,

"students wanted to have access to everything they use…from a single page, and not have to travel to different university web sites to accomplish different tasks,"[1]

College of Medicine faculty found a variety of ways to link from Blackboard to documents that they wanted students to read, resulting in declining use of the Library's Reserve function. The UVM Dana Medical Library reexamined the role of the library in providing course-related readings.[2] Since readings are online and students no longer go to the library to obtain a paper copy, why involve the library at all?

Goals

College of Medicine faculty requested help from Office of Medical Education (OME) staff in adding materials to Blackboard, work that involved obtaining copyright permission. OME staff turned to the library for advice in navigating copyright laws and practices. As OME displayed existing Blackboard links and described the help they needed, library staff concluded that they could be more helpful than they had realized. Library and OME staff developed six major objectives for Library Reserves in Blackboard:

- Control copyright costs.
- Make compliance with federal copyright law easy.
- Remove barriers that students encounter when trying to do the required readings.
- Encourage use of the University's electronic journal and book collections.
- Model the citation of references.
- Improve communication.
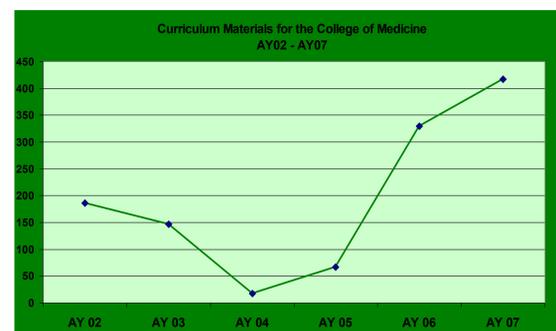

Results

Control copyright costs
- Most "reserve readings" are actually direct links to online journal articles.
- Faculty change the readings often enough that fair use still saves a significant amount of money.

	AY 06	AY 07	AY 08 (through 12/ 2007)
# of Courses in Blackboard	10	10	7
Copyright Fees	$5,012	$1,750	$1,675
Articles - # of Links	180	179	124
Articles - # of PDFs	38	32	8
Articles - Free	53	53	41
# of Articles Not Used - Permissions Denied	0	1	0
Books - # of Links	5	1	4
Books - # of PDFs	20	21	15
Books - Free	0	0	0
# of Book Chapters Not Used - Permissions Denied	0	0	0
Databases	2	3	1
Websites - # of Links	85	175	70
Websites - # of PDFs	0	6	6

- High copyright costs for AY 06 were due to the use of a particular book chapter at $2,037 per year. AY 06 costs also include copyright for many PDFs that, in AY 07, became links to articles on publishers' servers.

Make copyright compliance easy
- 2002-2004: Materials processed for College of Medicine by Dana Medical Library for physical reserve shelves and Voyager's E-Reserves module declined.
- 2005: Blackboard E-Reserves project began.
- 2005-present: Increasing number of College of Medicine materials processed by Dana.

Remove barriers for students
- Links to electronic journals and books appear within the course on the day the reading is due, in line with lecture notes, PowerPoint presentations, and learning modules for that day.
- Most links go directly to the document.
- The proxy server allows off-site access to online articles and books with a single logon to Blackboard.

Encourage use of the collection
- In cases where Blackboard contained recommended textbooks that the library owned electronically, electronic links to those books were added to Blackboard.
- Eight new electronic books have been added to the Library collection based on their status as required readings in Blackboard.
- At least 10 electronic journals have been added to the collection since 2005, based on their use in Blackboard.

Model the citation of references
BEFORE

AFTER

Improve communication
- The number of "seats" for Access Medicine was increased due to the use of its electronic book titles in the COM curriculum.
- Library staff check students' exam schedules in Blackboard and avoid scheduling maintenance or noisy events in the periods before these exams.

Discussion

Many of these goals were met through the use of direct linking to articles, rather than scanning articles and storing them on local servers. Direct links to articles on the publishers' servers don't require copyright permission. On the other hand, since some of the library's electronic journals are accessed through aggregators, it wasn't always obvious to faculty that an article was available online. In addition, creation of permanent links is sometimes more complicated than copying and pasting a URL.

The decision by the College of Medicine Office of Medical Education (OME) to give the Library responsibility, access, and authority for linking from courses to electronic journals, books, and databases (while continuing to pay copyright fees out of the OME budget) was important to the success of the project. As course management systems allow for, and sometimes force, more centralization, libraries and universities can benefit from the opportunity to offer this routine service.

Centralization allows one group of people to serve as experts in creating stable direct links, communicating with publishers, navigating fair use, and citing references. Since library staff already possess much of this capability, it's relatively easy for the library to continue to provide course-related readings.

Future plans include a survey of faculty satisfaction with the program, development of easier tracking methods[3], and scaling up the service to meet the needs of other colleges on campus.

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For further information

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