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CAMPUS TECHNOLOGY

Empowering
the World of
Higher Education

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Stir up your BI Initiative!

When it comes to that big **BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE** project, are all of your essential ingredients in place? (Without them, your new BI tools are just software.) Launch your evidence-centric initiative on page 46.



Why Go Digital?

This past June, the US Department of Education's Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (www.ed.gov/ACSFA) released its year-long study of the "broken" textbook market, (www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/acsfa/turnthepage.pdf), laying out the problem of the rising cost of textbooks, and suggesting various recommendations for steps the federal government, Congress, and the Secretary of Education can take to make textbooks more affordable. After detailing a set of short-term strategies similar to those outlined by the ACSFA, Patrick McElroy, CEO and founder of Learning Content Exchange (www.lcxcorp.com), and colleagues (who prepared one of the foundational documents for that study) put forth an additional analysis of disaggregating textbook content and course materials and delivering them digitally rather than by truck (www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/acsfa/mcelroypapermay2007.pdf).

Then, too, in testimony before the ACSFA, John Sargent, former CEO of Macmillan (www.macmillan.com), had this to say about custom and digital textbooks: "Custom texts are a prime example of market demand and advances in technology. A custom text enables faculty to choose exactly those materials—chapters from one or more textbooks, their own papers and lecture notes, white papers, independent data and research, for example—they wish to use

the bridge that crosses the digital divide, some of the eBooks from Bedford, Freeman & Worth (ebooks.bfwpub.com)—well-advanced in their pedagogy and offered at half the price of the print text—hint to a "born digital" future.

Mark Nelson, digital content strategist for the National Association of College Stores (www.NACAS.org), buys into the vision of a digital future, but puts the tipping point another five years

Mark Nelson at NACAS buys into the vision of a digital future, but puts the tipping point another five years down the road. The twin forces for change he sees: retirement of the baby-boom faculty and full emergence of the digital native population.

down the road. The twin forces for change he sees are retirement of the baby-boom faculty (many of whom will never quite embrace non-print), and full emergence of the digital native population—described by Nelson and supported by Project Tomorrow data (www.tomorrow.org) as students currently squirming in their seats in a sixth-grade classroom. Content born digital will then meet learners born digital, but the question is: Do we have to live through a five-year gestation? Perhaps; at least by then the eBook reader may finally have achieved its promise for portability, contrast, and navigational richness.

Yet it is easy enough to find examples of failed eBook experiments, and trace

poorly indexed content)

- ▶ **Inconvenience** ("I hate being tethered to an online text; I can't read my book under the buckeye tree")
- ▶ **Lack of flexibility** ("I can't take notes; I can't seamlessly jump to new content; the search and navigation are weak")
- ▶ **Faculty who don't really make use of the required eText** (or print texts, for that matter)

The majority of today's students still prefer printed text to eBook readers, and Stacy Skelly, assistant director/higher education for the Association of American Publishers (www.publishers.org), puts this preference for print near the top of her list of impediments to digital content delivery. She's right: Monitor glare, dropped network connections, and confounding digital rights management strategies detract from learning, especially if the digital learning environment is merely the print learning environment ported to the screen. However, if the pedagogy advanced by faculty creates a different learning environment, different learning outcomes may appear.

Cal State's Digital Marketplace will be an open and browseable market allowing faculty members to identify and select print or digital content appropriate for populating a reading/resource list, based on course learning objectives.

in their classes. These custom texts combine publishers' content, but also content from a variety of third-party sources."

This "print-on-demand" model suggests a strategy to move from generic texts to custom digital content, and one in which college bookstores can play an important role. Yet, on the other side of

the reasons for their failure. (Amazon's Kindle [www.amazon.com] is the latest experiment, and the jury is still out on that one.) Typically, user dissatisfaction revolves around the following:

- ▶ **Technology** (single-purpose display device, eye-fatiguing screens, material slow to load)
- ▶ **Organization** (linear "page turners,"

The Impact of the Instructional Designer

If the instructional designer's worldview prevailed, the very first thing on every course syllabus would be a list of learning outcomes associated with that course. Working *backward* from those objectives, the pedagogy and the learning materials that support that pedagogy would be carefully selected to help the students meet those objectives. Learning materials, whether print or digital, would be focused and organized around the stated learning objectives. Libraries and the web would provide conduits for subsidized or free content for students

Though the traditional textbook offers all needed information in one place, the mosaic of unmarked chapters among those with yellow highlights documents the need for custom texts directly matched to different course syllabi.

TEXTBOOK MYTHS



Myth: The high cost of textbooks is the main reason why students avoid the purchase of high textbook costs. The primary barrier to the use of the offerings produced by the free drive to electronic materials is the availability of good content and the desire to use it.

Myth: Textbooks are the source of needed content which can be pulled together from new book sales, local production and other sources. However, it is not clear that more efficient local book market will give the same quality content.

Myth: Textbooks should be customized. Though the traditional textbook is a learned information resource, the release of electronic content and the use of yellow highlights documents the need for custom texts directly matched to different course syllabi.

Myth: Interrelated materials are the primary focus of electronic materials. The cost (and lower quality) paper and text materials is a barrier to the use of electronic materials. However, more use and better access to the digital content may be the primary focus of the resulting value.

Myth: Text content is more and less available. Though digital content is available, clear documents that document the quality of content, content and quality ratings, timely updates and the length of time books are available to ensure program sustainability.

Myth: Electronic content is an easy replacement for all electronic materials. While it is possible to produce a textbook, many factors will be hard pressed to meet the requirement without significant investment funding.

Myth: Bookstores are focused on serving student interests. Many universities supplement their operating budgets by defining the college bookstore as a profit center as well as a student service. Consequently, the incentive may be to reduce operating revenue at the bookstore with reduced textbook costs to the student.

pursuing a broader array of individual learning goals.

Alverno College's (WI) Diagnostic Digital Portfolio website (ddp.alverno.edu) is a great place to learn how to describe attainable student learning outcomes. And yes, explicitly stating what you hope students will learn is challenging, but it's an exercise that offers the most amazing rewards.

What, then, is a learning objective? Simply put, it's a behavioral learning outcome consistent with course goals. Revolutionary, don't you think, to offer students—up front—a syllabus that specifies demonstrable, learned behaviors?

Learning Objectives in Action

Kelly Driscoll, educator and co-founder of Digication (www.digication.com), is both a digital pioneer and a teacher who believes in identifying learning outcomes upfront. Digication has been in the business of helping students, and the institutions in which they learn, to build ePortfolios around student learning outcomes. In fact, it wasn't much of a stretch for Driscoll and her content partners to think about an expanded system that grouped digital content underneath learning objectives—Digication is only one example of a model

for distributing digital content in a focused, cost-effective manner.

Gerry Hanley, senior director of academic technology services for **California State University**, has another model in mind as he and his team lay out plans for a Digital Marketplace (DMP; www.calstate.edu/ats/digital_marketplace). He discusses DMP using the analogy of a farmer's market, an open and browseable market with wares selectable by the consumer. This large-scope and well-designed approach to sharing digital content will allow faculty members to identify and select content appropriate for populating a reading/resource list, based on course learning objectives. These materials can be made available as print or digital content, and DMP will be designed for maximum flexibility to accommodate commercial, non-commercial, and faculty-member-created content. Somewhere down the road, students in the Cal State system will be able to create ePortfolios in which to document their learned competencies. These learning outcomes will share metadata with the content used to achieve them and thereby help future faculty identify vetted learning materials.

Starting with the consumer, the eText Ohio project is focusing on student learning outcomes in the world of digital delivery. With the support of the OhioLINK library consortium (www.ohiolink.edu), eText Ohio has opted to focus on faculty members who teach large introductory courses in colleges and universities across the state. Working with four leading commercial pub-

WEB EXTRAS

Next-Gen Textbooks: With textbooks and other forms of scholarship moving to electronic formats, schools are turning to a surprising array of innovative tools. www.campustechnology.com/articles/40848.

Case Study: NYU College of Dentistry Takes Textbooks Online. www.campustechnology.com/articles/48557.