Learning and Scholarly Technologies at the University of Washington
Faculty, TA, and Student Surveys

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In order for the University of Washington (UW) to provide essential technology resources and services that meet the changing needs of the UW community, it is vital to gather reliable information about evolving trends. To this end several UW units partnered to survey faculty, teaching assistants (TAs), and students in spring 2008 about their technology use and needs. This is our third triennial survey on this topic. In this paper, we report and discuss data from these surveys related to the technology use of faculty, teaching assistants, and students.

Methods

Participants: The faculty recruitment sample was comprised of 3,499 people. The response rate for faculty was 16.2% (N=567). The response rate for TAs was 24.5% (N=233). The student recruitment sample included 5,000 graduate and undergraduate students, with a response rate of 13.8% (N=656). With few exceptions, our respondent samples were representative of their respective groups.

Survey instrument: All three surveys followed the same structure regarding technology use. In the first section, we gathered demographic data (e.g., position/class status) and asked general questions about technology expertise. The section of the survey that we report here was designed to help us understand how technology was used within various teaching and learning contexts in order to meet diverse teaching and learning goals.

We first asked participants to select a context (e.g., "large lecture"); then we asked them to select a goal that was important within that context (e.g., for students, "access and use of libraries"). We then asked participants to choose a second context different from the first and to answer the same set of questions about goals and technology use. This format allowed us to gather data reflecting a broad range of participants’ experiences using technology.

Technology use was much more uniform than anticipated: a few technologies were widely adopted, while several other technologies are seldom used. Some general patterns of technology use hold true regardless of the context or goal selected: a few technologies are consistently used, while several other technologies are seldom used. It is important to note, however, that even all of our technology use questions asked respondents to first select a context and then to select technologies used within that context; these numbers do not encompass all technology use. We divided the technologies listed into three general categories based on natural clusters within the data: pervasive use (selected in more than 50% of faculty, TA, and student responses across contexts); moderate use (10-49.9%); and limited use (less than 10%).

Conclusions

- Student use in general was higher than faculty and TAs for limited use technologies (Figure 1; Box 1). These results suggest that faculty may have less exposure to some of the technologies that students use.
- Technology use was much more uniform than anticipated: a few technologies were widely used across contexts and goals, while others were seldom used.
- The general patterns of pervasive, moderate and limited technology use seen in Figure 1 held true regardless of teaching or learning context.