



Faculty Technology Newsletter

Fall, 2013

From the editor: The fall has seen the introduction of exciting new academic technologies at Boston College: a new learning management system, the first Academic Innovation Program projects, and 3-D printing. On the dark side, the campus continues to be a target of malicious phishing attempts. Faculty can take simple measures described below to protect against these invasions. I welcome your suggestions and ideas for future newsletters. - Clare O'Connor, Biology Dept. (clare.oconnor@bc.edu)

Bye, bye Blackboard — Hello Canvas!

The much-awaited Canvas migration is underway, with a scheduled completion date in early 2015. A handful of intrepid faculty members have been piloting Canvas sites this fall semester, while IDeS and ITS staff have overseen the integration of Canvas with the portal, UIS, library course reserves, Lecture Capture and iClickers. Another 150 faculty members in the Early Adopters group are preparing close to 400 Canvas sites for a spring debut.



Initial reactions to the Canvas platform have been overwhelmingly positive. Unlike our older Blackboard platform, Canvas is a “web-native” application with a clean, modern look. Students will be able to access and interact with course information on Canvas with a variety of mobile devices. Canvas includes a suite of powerful and intuitive tools for faculty to edit pages, connect content within and between sites, communicate with students and facilitate collaboration. For example, when an instructor adds an assignment to a course, the assignment is automatically linked with the syllabus, calendar and grade book.

Unlike Blackboard, Canvas is hosted and maintained in the cloud. Consequently, programs will receive more frequent updates from the developers at Instructure. Not to worry—ITS is testing a disaster recovery plan for emergencies. Additional information about Canvas is available at the IDeS site (www.bc.edu/canvas) or at the developer’s website, www.instructure.com.

Grant opportunities for academic technology

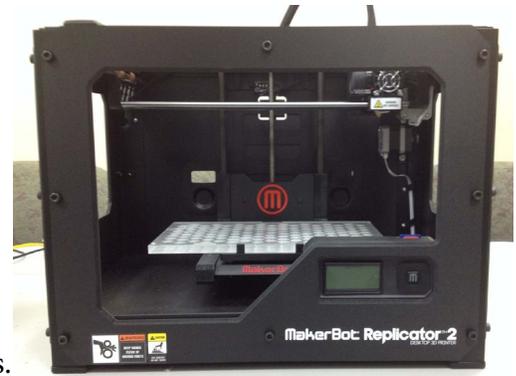
Do you have an idea for incorporating academic technology into your courses? The Academic Technology Advisory Board (ATAB) sponsors Academic Technology Innovation Grants (ATIGs) and Exploratory Technology Grants (ETGs) that could help you to implement your innovation. ATIGs support projects in the range of \$8000-20,000. **The deadline for the 2014 ATIG submissions is February 21** and the projected start date is June 1. Applications for ETGs are accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis. ETGs have a maximum award of \$3000 and support both stand-alone projects and pilots for larger ATIG grants. Consult the ATAB web page (www.bc.edu/atab) for additional information, examples of previous ATIG projects and online application forms.

AIP projects begin to take shape

The goal of the Academic Innovation Program, a joint initiative of ATAB and the University Council on Teaching (UCT), is to use technology to foster student-faculty interaction. After an extended series of conversations with faculty last spring, teams are being assembled and projects are beginning to take shape. Projects involve technologies for fieldwork with mobile devices, digital badging, online module creation, and more. The first project, “Reimagining the History Core” is underway. Expect additional details in future newsletters.

3-D printing comes to campus

Three-dimensional printing is quickly transforming the process that architects, engineers, artists and inventors use to construct models of their designs. BC faculty can now print 3-dimensional objects with the MakerBot Replicator 2 (<http://store.makerbot.com/replicator2.html>) located in the Faculty Microcomputer Resource Center (FMRC), Carney 403. The MakerBot constructs models by sequentially applying very thin (~0.1 mm) layers of plastic to coordinates specified by a computer file. The printer uses files in the .stl (STereoLithography) format commonly part of computer-aided design (CAD) software packages.



We constructed the items pictured below in the FMRC, using PLA (polylactic acid) filament, a biodegradable corn-based plastic. In addition to this translucent, naturally-colored PLA filament, the printer can also use translucent and solid filaments in a variety of colors. The website thingiverse.com has designs for thousands of other models that can be downloaded and used by the printer. We encourage faculty to explore the 3D printer. Contact Michael Connolly (cnnmj) or Clare O'Connor (oconnocn) or stop by the FMRC during staffed hours (<http://bc.edu/fmrc>).



Bracelet expands to fit



Comb



Threadable screw



Snowflake



Movable links

Don't be a phried phish - staying ahead of the phishermen

Like every university, BC is the constant target of increasingly sophisticated phishing attempts in which an apparently “trustworthy” source sends an email designed to obtain usernames, passwords or financial information from the recipient. Your BC password is particularly valuable, because it grants access to your accounts on a number of different servers. An individual who logs into Agora with your password can inflict some serious damage: changes can be made to your grades, your bank account information, your Blackboard courses, campus groups, PIN—the list goes on! This same individual has access to your email, paycheck information, advisees and calendar.

Some tips for defeating the phishermen:

Protect your BC password. Do not use it for any other accounts and change the password on a regular basis. Currently, BC will ask you to change your password in the month before your birthday, but you are welcome to change it more often. (It's also a good idea to protect your username, but for most of us, the username has already been spread around the web in email messages.) When you change your password, the new information is sent within minutes to the UIS, People Soft, Adobe CQ, and MyFiles servers. Some time within the next 24 hours, the Kronos, library and Blackboard servers will require the new password to log in. Additional information on passwords is available at bc.edu/password.

Forward suspicious messages to abuse@bc.edu. ITS personnel monitor this account 24/7. They are able to work with suspect messages in a sandbox and to modify filters to block further messages.

For additional information, see www.bc.edu/security.

Thanks to Michael Connolly, Kit Baum, Rita Owens, Bryan Blakeley, Jaye Schneider, Richard Jenson, Scott Cann and Mary Durr for supplying information and commentary for this newsletter. - C.O.