e-Bytes

A Newsletter from e-Learning Services

October 2019

Accessibility, Usability, Universal Design:
Similar, but not Synonymous

You may have heard the terms accessible, usable, and universal design used in a variety of contexts around campus, often interchangeably. It's important to understand that while these terms are related, they have different meanings and therefore different implications for instructional content creation and course design. Let's take a closer look at these three important terms:

Accessibility generally relates to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and also sections 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This legislation guides the college's efforts to provide equal and integrated educational access for our diverse student body. Examples of **accessible** course content include documents that can be navigated correctly by screen reader technology and videos that contain accurate closed captions.

Usability refers to the quality of a user's experience when interacting with products or systems, including websites, software, devices, or applications. It's possible for an online course to have **accessible** videos, but the videos may not be **usable** if they are in a format students can't open or if they are posted in a hard to find location. A website may be technically **accessible** for a screen reader to navigate, but it may not be very **usable** if it requires a blind user to memorize a non-standard set of keyboard shortcuts to navigate the site. Visit Usability.gov for more information about usability.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. The purpose of UDL is to reduce barriers to learning and provide all learners with rigorous, meaningful learning. The UDL framework promotes the use of multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. A basic example is an assignment in which students are allowed to write an essay, create a video, or record a podcast demonstrating mastery of the desired learning outcomes (multiple means of action and expression). Creating **accessible** content is part of providing multiple means of representation of content (ex. a captioned video provides content as audio, imagery, and text). Visit the CAST website for more information about Universal Design.

As you can see, these terms are related, but not synonymous. If you have questions about accessibility, usability, or UDL, please reach out to e-Learning Services or the Disability Services Office.

Today's Tech Byte: Entering the Bb Atmosphere

When a student enters your course "space," what's the first thing they see? For many, it's the "Course Introduction" page, where they are welcomed to the class, can read about their instructor, and find the syllabus. All important info, but after a few weeks of class, students land on the Course Intro and immediately rocket off to other areas. It may be time to redirect course entry to another page. You can open to the Announcements page so students don't miss updates from Mission Control, or open on Course Content so they can take right off on their next mission! If you'd like to change your course entry point, email Carrie or Angela your course ID and section number and the page you'd like your students to land on when entering the course. A quick switch can provide your students with a happy landing!

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Spring Blackboard Shells

Blackboard course shells for spring will start appearing in course lists as early as October 8th. Contact your instructional designer if you need assistance with course copying. You can also view the tutorial on Course Copy on our e-LS website.

Wagons (Still) Rolling!

The quest for a new Learning Management System (LMS) continues! The RFP through the State of Idaho closed mid-September. The proposals are currently being reviewed; more information to follow!

Saddle Up, Pioneers!

As we mentioned in last month's issue, we are looking for pioneers from across campus to run courses in the new LMS in Spring 2020. Pioneers will attend workshops over winter break to learn the new LMS, modify content that didn't transfer correctly, and make any other adjustments needed to get the course running optimally in the new system.

Pioneers and eLS will meet throughout the spring semester to address any issues and get updates. This feedback will help the rest of campus when they begin their journey to the new system in summer and fall.

Ideal pioneers meet these criteria:
- 1 year of online teaching
- Can attend training over winter break
- Available to meet periodically during spring semester
- Willing to collect and share feedback

Email e-learning@lcsc.edu if you're interested in being part of the adventure!