Chapter 7
Remote Access and Course Management Software

ABSTRACT

In addition to electronic reserves, instructors can link database materials through course management systems (CMS). This type of software allows faculty to link articles from databases into their course materials. This chapter provides an overview of different course management software and explains how instructors or librarians can link course materials into these systems.

INTRODUCTION

There are proprietary course management systems and open source systems. The major proprietary and open source CMS are Angel, Blackboard, WebCT, Moodle, and Sakai. The course management software provides for asynchronous learning and the ability to link articles or other materials into the CMS. Students with their password to the CMS are able to access the material or print it if necessary. There are options to provide links to databases through the CMS, however, students will often need to use a different password to access the library databases if they are not authenticated through the library link provided in the CMS. While this can be tedious and an extra step for students to access the materials they need it also provides them with the opportunity to work on an assignment while using the LMS.

BACKGROUND

There are a number of course management systems available. Institutions can select from proprietary or open source learning management systems. Some examples of open source are Sakai and Moodle and examples of proprietary
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are Angel, Blackboard and WebCT. Each system allows the instructor to link to library resources. This can include links to the catalog, articles in a database, a specific database or databases and electronic or e-reserves. Another opportunity exists for librarians to work with an instructor and embed themselves into an online class. An embedded librarian program provides the students with library instruction and the chance to work with the librarian to find the sources they need for their research project through remote access. Course management systems provide a myriad of opportunities to link students through remote access to library resources.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Course management systems (CMS) provide faculty with the ability to teach classes to students in distance education programs. A CMS allows faculty to incorporate a variety of media and technology into their online class. Through the CMS an instructor can upload Word documents, PowerPoint presentations, links to web sites, videos, and podcasts. Students likewise can upload the same materials into the CMS for assignments or discussions. A face-to-face class can use the CMS for assignments and exams but their primary use is with online programs and classes. There are both open source and proprietary learning management systems. Two of the more widely know open source CMS are Moodle and Sakai. The major proprietary CMS vendor is Blackboard but there are others including CERTPOINT, iversity, eCollege, and Desire2Learn are just a few of the many choices available to colleges and universities. Once the university selects the LMS faculty and students receive training on how the software functions and how to design their course using the features available in the software. Students receive training on accessing course materials, post to discussion boards, submit assignments and take exams. Online courses taught synchronously where the students and instructor meet at a specific day and time and work in the course management system in real time. The instructor can push web pages, presentations, videos and podcasts to their students and students have the opportunity to interact with the instructor and their fellow-students during the synchronous instruction session. There are many software options for synchronous teaching and some are Elluminate, Adobe Connect, Microsoft Live Meeting and Wimba. All of these options are stand-alone software that a distance-learning program can incorporate into the course management system.

Video tools for synchronous instruction are available through the CMS used by the institution. Blackboard, for example, integrates Elluminate and Wimba into their CMS products. Elluminate and Wimba provide instructors with the ability to use a web camera while teaching a synchronous instruction. The session can be recorded and the instructor can embed the link into the course material. Connecting distance education students with library instruction is a necessity in the 21st century. A study of library instruction to distance education students by the University of the West Indies and the University of Iowa revealed the importance of technology in reaching students taught off-campus (McLean and Dew, 2006). Both universities have different off-campus programs. The University of the West Indies used videoconferencing to instruct their distance education students on locating, evaluating and using information from library resources. The video conferencing instruction session introduced students to library resources and services (McLean and Dew, 2006). The University of Iowa used videoconferencing to provide an online class to distance education students that instructed them on using the library’s resources and services. The course was created for their distance education MBA program and the success of this initial class led the library to explore expanding their online instruction to distance education students (McLean and Dew, 2006).
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