

Proposal for Implementation of Social Software Applications

RU*asis&t* is the Rutgers University (RU) chapter of the American Society for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T). We are affiliated with the local New Jersey ASIS&T chapter. I am currently the Co-President of this organization.

Needs Assessment/Evaluation

Each semester, RU*asis&t* plans “technology bootcamps” for incoming MLIS students. The technology bootcamps are designed to teach incoming MLIS students about Rutgers technology and to introduce them to online features available at RU Libraries. Current MLIS students are recruited to instruct and assist with the workshops. Based on feedback we received from our Fall 2008 sessions, there are some items that need to be addressed:

1. Incoming students have varying levels of technical savvy. Instructors cover a lot of material and some students expressed concerns (after the workshop) that they felt uncomfortable asking too many questions due to a perception that they would be “holding up” the class. Specific tutorials (e.g., screencasts) of processes covered in class would be helpful for students who need review, especially if they can access them at a later time.
2. Some students were admitted only a few days before they attended the workshop. RU does not allow students to set up their EDEN accounts until they have registered for classes and paid their tuition. People who had not satisfied these requirements were not able to fully participate in the workshops. Again, these students would benefit from screencasting or other video walkthroughs to help them properly set up their accounts on their own.
3. Sessions are not mandatory, so not all new students attend. The presentations are available on the RU*asis&t* website, but they are somewhat dated and require that the user have PowerPoint (or the viewer) installed on their computer. Moving the presentations to a hosting site, like [Slideshare.net](http://slideshare.net), would make it easier for users to view the presentations without the need for a software download.
4. The amount of material covered can be overwhelming. Students who are new to the program often find they have additional technical questions as they begin their classes. With new print restrictions on campus, it is growing increasingly difficult to print out handouts for all attendees. Students need to be able to easily access the presentations

after the workshop is over, and more complete instructions for basic processes would be useful.

5. New and current students can provide a rich resource for tech tips and tricks as well as suggestions for material to be covered in future presentations. At the present time, there is not a forum for students to communicate this information with others. A collaborative, easily edited venue, such as a wiki, would make it easier for students to contribute.

Social Software Application Implementation

The goal of social software application implementation for *RUasis&t* is to make it easy for new MLIS students to access the information we provide. We want new students to be able to easily view presentations and screencasts without downloading unnecessary software. We also want them to be able to easily add content that may help other students.

Wiki

The current [RUasis&t website](#) primarily functions as a place for information about upcoming workshops. It is hosted on the SCILS server at RU and requires special permission and passwords to access. It also requires that the person who wishes to modify the site has some experience with html. Current website functionality is acceptable, but it makes sense to link the existing website to a wiki where students can find more information about upcoming events, information about how to join ASIS&T, tech tips and tricks, and suggestions for changes to existing presentations or ideas for new workshops. Screencast instructions will be provided for students who would like to edit the wiki. This will allow students who have “a-ha” moments after the workshops to share that information with others. It will also allow dated content to be easily updated.

A wiki seems like the most appropriate tool to use in these circumstances because content can be easily added and/or updated without the chronological restrictions that a blog imposes. Many of the students who are likely to access the website (and the wiki) are new to the MLIS program, and are often new to the campus. A wiki provides an easy way to centralize a variety of useful tools in one place so that the users are not initially overloaded with new technology.

Flickr

Students often ask many questions during the workshops that are unrelated to technology. It would be helpful to have photos of places where students congregate in and around the SCILS building so that new students can visualize what they are looking for. Students would be able to contribute their own campus photos to the group to help incoming MLIS students feel comfortable with the campus.

Delicious

During our workshops, students are frequently curious about parking, transportation, bus schedules, the train station, the bookstore, and where they can buy inexpensive software. Using

Delicious to collect useful bookmarks and add them to the wiki will help students quickly find what they are looking for. They can look at the link roll on the wiki or follow a link directly to Delicious.

Screencasting

While students follow along in the workshops, many of them will not need to use the skills we teach for several weeks. The amount of material covered can be somewhat overwhelming. Screencasts provide an excellent step-by-step audiovisual aid to walk students through the processes that they need at SCILS. Screencast files can be hosted online at screencast.com, or they can be put on the SCILS server. Students can then access them at their convenience, whenever they need assistance.

Evaluation and Timetable for Implementation

Ideally, the social software applications will be implemented on a trial basis before the January 17, 2009 workshops. Students will be asked to complete a survey at the end of the workshop. A second survey will be sent out one month after the start of the semester to determine which tools, if any, students prefer and how often they have accessed or recommended the tools to others.