

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

December 2009

Windows 7	1
Snow Leopard	1
Online Shopping Safety	1
Security Awareness Month	2
Lyle Email Consolidations	2
Departmental Cell Phones	2
Account Maintenance Automation	3
Clickers in the classroom	4
2009 and 2010... At a glance	5

Our Mission:

"The mission of the Office of Information Technology is to support and enhance the academic and administrative activities of Southern Methodist University.

To fulfill its mission, IT provides computing, information processing, and communications resources to satisfy the needs of faculty, students, and staff, and offers comprehensive support services to help them use technology effectively and creatively.

IT is dedicated to actively seeking input from its customers, understanding their needs and challenges, and working with them to implement appropriate solutions. In its leadership role, IT is committed to creating and nurturing the vital information technology environment required for SMU to achieve its vision of excellence in education".

Questions, comments, or suggestions?
Contact

IT Communications
oitcommunications@smu.edu

Windows 7 Campus Deployment Update

Windows 7 officially made its debut on October 22. The IT staff has been researching and testing Windows 7 during its beta release. The team is now testing with the final release of the software. Over the next few months, IT will be evaluating the new OS in the following areas: compatibility with existing applications and services, computer settings and security configurations, and exploring the new functionality. Once the initial testing process is complete, the standard image will be compiled and deployed to campus.

Although Windows 7 is a "new and improved" Vista, there are a number of new security features to be considered. Several of these may be quite useful in our environment to provide better protection for our computers and our network. In addition, some of the new features such as libraries and direct connect need to be fully tested and explored.



IT will be working closely with a number of support personnel in various departments, to test application compatibility and the various security configurations recommended for our environment. Additional information will be provided in future newsletters.

Snow Leopard Deployment

Snow Leopard was released in October. Although this new OS does not offer many new features, IT has been testing the new OS to ensure compatibility. We are currently involving support personnel in the various departments to test this OS before final release to the campus. Based on the current project schedule, IT will begin Snow Leopard installations in February.



Online Shopping Safety Tips

As the holidays approach, the amount of online purchases increases dramatically. Before you enter your credit card information, be sure to check the security of the website to ensure the safety of your information! Look for an https prefix to the URL and the "lock" icon visible in the web browser. If these icons are not available on the screen where your credit card is entered, DO NOT enter your information. Also, be on the watch for Phishing emails asking for you to verify your accounts, online orders etc. These tend to increase as well during the holiday season. For additional online security information, visit <http://www.safeshopping.org>.



Security Awareness Month and the Technology Fair

October was (Cyber) Security Awareness Month. The Office of Information Technology celebrated with weekly brown bag sessions that opened with a POPCORN! event on October 2nd, in the Hughes-Trigg Crossing. A total of five Brown Bag sessions were offered covering a wide range of security topics. Security Awareness month culminated on October 30th with the Technology Fair.

The Technology Fair offered a number of sessions presented by several IT staff as well as several vendors. The Vendors included Microsoft, Apple, Verizon, Dell and HiEd. In addition, tables were setup in the Prefunctor area of Hughes Trigg with staff offering assistance with Blackboard, Cell Phones, Security information, STARs information, and Vendor product demonstrations. A special session allowed four of the faculty who received the Provost Instructional Technology Grants this past year to present their work. The faculty members who presented are: Pauline Newton, Qin Lei, Keiko Schneider and Marsha Grasselli. Special thanks to Cynthia Standfield and Katie Wallace for organizing the fair, and to all of our presenters: George Finney, Terry Johnston, Jason Warner, Rachel Mulry, Ian Aberle, and Brad Boeke.

Prizes were awarded throughout the day. Apple gave an iPod Nano to Karen Leeseberg. HiEd gave away an Olympus recorder (Martin Sweidel), a HomeDock Deluxe (Steve Snider), and two laptop sleeves (Sandra Blackstone and Matthew Rispoli). The Office of Information Technology gave away forty Tangle USB hubs. There was also popcorn, cookies, candy, pens, hand-sanitizers, and bookmarks! It was a great way to end the month.

The Office of Information Technology welcomes suggestions for Security Awareness education as well as the next Technology Fair. If you have ideas for topics, presenters, scheduling (day, month, time, etc.), and/or methods of delivery (techniques) please send them to OITCommunications@smu.edu.

Lyle Email Consolidation Project

Over the past several months, staff members from both OIT and Lyle have been working diligently on a project to consolidate email services provided by Lyle with the main campus email services. The project has been quite complex as it addresses not only email accounts, but listserves, public folders, resources and various other details.

The discovery and testing phases of the project are nearing completion. During the month of December, OIT will be finalizing the documentation and instructions to be used during the conversion as well as migrating the various contacts and listserves. Migration of all email accounts is scheduled for January 2010. Notifications about the scheduling of each migration will be sent in December as well.

The Lyle email addresses (@lyle.smu.edu, @enr.smu.edu and @seas.smu.edu) will be maintained. Lyle employees will then have access to the campus Global Address List, Free/Busy scheduling information, Lyris ListManager, Webmail.smu.edu and other email capabilities currently available the rest of the campus.

This is an important milestone for both Lyle and OIT. Both teams are working diligently to ensure a smooth transition for all to the new services. Additional project details are posted on the website at <http://www.smu.edu/OIT/Projects/Lyle.aspx>.

Departmental Cell Phones

In an effort to provide more complete information on the entire lifecycle of departmental cell phones, our website has been updated with new information. The new content outlines everything from the order process, recommend phones and plans, cancellation process and instructions for allowing an individual to view the usage details of their phone. We are also streamlining many of our processes for cellular support. Please submit any cell phone questions, orders or cancellation requests to help@smu.edu or via help.smu.edu. To view the new content posted on our site, <http://www.smu.edu/OIT/Services/Service List/Cellular Phones.aspx>.

Account Maintenance Automation—Coming Soon!

Each year, thousands of accounts are created by the Office of Information Technology Services. These accounts include the main network/authentication accounts, Access.SMU, and others. For all faculty and staff account requests, there can be as many as 12 different groups involved in completing an account request! This obviously requires a great deal of coordination and time from those involved and can cause a delay between the moment someone is hired and the moment they have access to IT services.

In addition to just creating brand new accounts, hundreds of tickets are processed each year for modifications to accounts and account deletions as individuals transfer to another department or leave the University. Relying on manual processes for timely changes to permissions is a security concern, and is not as efficient as it should be.

A project has been underway to automate as much of the account creation, modification and termination process as possible. We are excited to announce that this new process, known as Account Maintenance Automation (AMA), is scheduled to go live at the end of February. The process is extremely complicated in its design as it has to take into consideration the various relationships that an individual may have with the University at any point in time.

Account Creation

A process will launch shortly after an SMU ID record is created in Access.SMU with a certain relationship (faculty, staff, student, contractor etc). This process will create the basic authentication account, email address, and Access.SMU Self Service account for that individual. In addition, the main group membership will be applied (used for the bulk email lists and other permissions). The individuals will then have the ability to go to a secure website and enter their SMU ID number. They will be prompted to answer a few additional questions before setting their account password. This eliminates the various notification procedures including mailed letters to students with password information! So within a few hours, an individual would be able to gain access to their email account and various other services provided by IT.

If an individual faculty or staff member needs additional permissions, such as V drive access, the supervisor will have to submit a request for those permissions to be assigned. IT is investigating automating many of these other account permissions during future phases of the process development.

Account Deletions

Removing accounts for employees that are no longer at the University in a timely manner is a critical security measure for the University. Therefore, the new AMA process will remove access to the various services provided by OIT on the date of termination. A history of any changes to the account will be maintained. Therefore, if access needs to be restored quickly, it can be done more efficiently than the current process.

Any exceptions to the account deletion process will need to be requested in advance from the IT Help Desk by the supervisor. If a supervisor wishes for an employee to retain access to their accounts for a period of time following their termination, this must be submitted in advance and an override will be processed.

How does this affect you?

This new process will radically change the account management for campus! Here are some of the changes that you will see once the process is launched:

- Accounts for new hires are created within a few hours of the creation of their SMU ID number.
- Individuals will set their initial password on a website rather than relying on account letters or notifications.
- Supervisors will notice new webforms for requesting account permissions.
- Accounts for terminated employees will be disabled immediately upon termination.

It will be of the utmost importance that all paperwork for employees is processed in a timely fashion in order to maintain employee access to accounts and services.

Additional information will be made available on our website as the "Go Live" date approaches. It is currently slated for late February 2010.

Classroom Clickers!!!

by Bivin Sadler

Student comprehension, retention, and motivation are surely among the most foundational cornerstones of the world's greatest student centric universities. It is no secret that these cornerstones are nurtured with small class sizes, real life interesting projects, and professors who inspire and fuel students with their love for their discipline. However, with today's decreases in educational funding and increase in educational demand, many universities find themselves having to play tug of war between the beneficial factors above and necessary evils including increases in class sizes to one, two and even over three hundred students. How can we serve the needs of the hard working, knowledge seeking graduates of tomorrow, while still satisfying the hard boundaries set by dwindling budgets and increased demand?

Enter classroom clickers! These are palm sized student held devices that provide students a "voice" in classrooms of limitless size. Although countless applications exist, below are a few of the ways I have used clickers to enhance my teaching effectiveness.

Perhaps the most obvious utility of clickers is their ability to enable the teacher to evaluate their students in real time. All too often teachers must try and read the faces and body language of their students in an effort to assess whether or not the lesson was received. A more thorough teacher may devise a quick quiz so that he or she may get an idea of class comprehension by the next class. The problem is that using either of these strategies will inevitably leave at least a few students frustrated and confused while the quiz method may provide useful information a little too late! I use clickers with PowerPoint in order to deliver real time multiple choice and numeric questions that survey the class on their understanding of current and past topics. The software compiles a visual report that displays all students answers anonymously so that the student and the teacher can see not only how many answered correctly but what the wrong answers were as well. Students can rejoice if they were correct and see that they were not alone if they answer incorrectly. In addition, teachers can customize instruction to explain common incorrect answers and can assess whether to move on with the lesson or if more time is needed on the current one.

Clickers also provide a quick way to deliver, grade, and record quizzes and tests. I once taught a class of 108 and was puzzled on how to evaluate their progress without generating 108 papers to grade each day. Although I like to have a few free response questions that I grade by hand, the students were able to answer multiple choice, matching, and numerical input questions using the clicker as a sort of Scantron. The advantage of the clicker is that the software will not only grade and record the scores to Blackboard automatically, but can generate detailed score reports and statistics pertaining to the test as well.

Although the above advantages have had a tremendous effect on my teaching efficiency and effectiveness, the greatest advantage of the clicker is its power to excite! My students have loved having a "voice" in class. Normally, the "clicker questions" are not graded although I will occasionally offer extra credit and find that things really get interesting. In addition, I have used the clickers in a group environment where 4 or 5 students get only a single clicker (a single voice) and must thus debate and communicate with each other in order to come up with a consensus. Unbelievable classroom discussions have developed in this way!

Above are the three biggest advantages I have experienced in my teaching although I believe there to be countless additional applications and uses yet to be discovered. Like any other teaching tool, it is not an end in itself. The more creative and excited the teacher is, the more value they will find in the clicker. However, as far as tools are concerned, I feel that this one is up there with the wheel!

Bivin Sadler is currently working with Dr. Monnie McGee. He is a PhD Candidate in the Statistics department.

2009 at a Glance and What's coming in 2010

As we enter the last month of 2009, we'd like to share just a few of the accomplishments during this past year as well as look ahead at what is to come. The following list represents only the major projects or initiatives --- representing 30% of what IT does on a daily basis! The list of initiatives for 2010 continues to grow daily. We look forward to continuing to provide new services, enhancements and exceptional support to the entire University community.

Major Highlights of 2009

- Spam.smu.edu implementation
- Time and Labor implementation
- Benefits Administration implementation
- T2 EBusiness implementation
- eProcurement implementation
- AARO and Mustang Corral Registration implementation
- Studio Abroad implementation
- Dspace pilot implementation
- SiteCore migrations: OIT, Lyle, Meadows, Dedman, Perkins
- Unification Efforts: Lyle email consolidation, ITAC formed, OIT Renamed and reorganized
- Blackboard Major Upgrade
- High Performance Computing Cluster
- Faculty Media lab created
- Patterson Data Center expansion
- Rice Alternative Emergency Site
- Budgets upgrade
- Image Now -major developments in workflow functionality
- Online Course Evaluations-- expanded and improved
- A large number of network upgrades and new construction including TAOS, Prothro, Caruth
- OIT service initiatives: Project Management Process, Cellular Phone order/activate process, OIT website redesign, Focus Groups, Technology Fair
- IT Tech Students in Fondren Library and Hamon

What's on the horizon for 2010?

- Account Management Automation
- Sharepoint implementation
- Office 2010
- Windows 7 and Snow Leopard deployments begin
- Gradebook in Access.SMU
- Cox Email consolidation
- Wireless network consolidation
- Software Distribution through LanDesk
- Room Scheduling and Optimization System
- Unified Communications
- and so much more!

We will continue to highlight the various projects and new services on our website as well as in future newsletters.