Comparison of WebCT & Moodle Course Management Systems (CMS)

Presentation to M.Ed. Program
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Agenda
• Background: what is a Course Management System (CMS)?
• Rationale to move to a CMS for M.Ed.
• Factors that must be considered in the decision
• Reason for making decision now
• Comparison of Moodle & WebCT:
  – Similarities
  – Differences
  – Screen shots of some key features
• Input and vote
Initial poll

- Who has used Moodle? WebCT?
- Based on what you already know, if you make a pre-assessment: which would you choose right now for next year:
  - Stay same: Use WebX and Contribute
  - WebCT
  - Moodle
- What do you need to know to be able to make a choice by the end of this session today?

What is a CMS?

- Internet-based software for development, support & delivery of online courses
- A structured system or managing a collection of online tools within one place (compared with UMD FacultETools, which is a suite of separate tools)
- Purpose is to facilitate online teaching & learning.
Why Move to CMS for M.Ed.?

• Outgrown what we have: WebX, Contribute not designed to be CMS. So much more to online teaching than can easily be done with these & UMD suite of FacultETools.
• As faculty expand online teaching methods, & as we draw in new faculty:
  – Limited by current tools
  – Different faculty using different tools, in different ways (confusing to students)
    • Need training on each tool (sometimes involves different people to teach each)
• Schools & corporations are using CMS: need to prepare students in these (model)

Factors Influencing Decision

• Must be something that ITSS & CEHSP Tech can support (training, support of students & faculty)
• Must be appropriate for our methods of teaching adults in using a model of critical reflection within a learning community
• Must be easy for faculty & students to learn how to use
• Must be accessible
• Connection possible dial-up modem
2 Choices: Moodle & WebCT

Moodle
- Social constructionist design
- Moodle tools focus on: group work, collaboration, communication, sharing, activities, and critical reflection, .. collaborative type of learning."
- Open Source

WebCT
- Designed for teacher directed/centered delivery of content
- Especially geared for lower level courses, large classes
- Proprietary, vast user base
- ePacks by textbooks designed for WebCT

Similarities: Both WebCT & Moodle
- Supported by UMD
- Student enrollment in courses
- Restricted access
- Customization
- Uploading files (e.g. Word docs, PowerPoint, audio files)
- Linking to external web sites (e.g. syllabus on faculty member’s site; UMD library)
- Zip course & provide on CD to students
- Discussion forum
- Synchronous chat
- Quizzes, tests
- Drop box
- Course calendar
- Grades
- Monitoring student participation
- Copy course over from semester
- Customized template
## Differences in Key Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Moodle</th>
<th>WebCT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bandwidth</td>
<td>All features work on dial-up</td>
<td>Bandwidth hog: slow to load, times out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning curve</td>
<td>Can use w/o manual or training; no configuration</td>
<td>Not as intuitive because many components; need to configure initially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Photos, nested threads</td>
<td>See posts one at time; not nested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Blog, wiki, journal, glossary, workshop (Wimba coming soon), RSS feed</td>
<td>Whiteboard &amp; hands raised in chat; Wimba for audio discussion; one-on-one in group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Costly to UM (not educ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Differences (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Moodle</th>
<th>WebCT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customization</td>
<td>Open source (so can change locally (Twin Cities) on demand by IT programmer)</td>
<td>Need to request change from WebCT (may not happen or happen quickly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Statistics</td>
<td>Chart comparing students; # visits per page</td>
<td>Time student spent on each page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>Quizzes &amp; tests; Vote option; tests built into lesson</td>
<td>Quizzes &amp; tests; can build in tests using other tools (e.g. UM trainings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Packs</td>
<td>Relatively new, but not common</td>
<td>Many textbook companies provide for WebCT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The initial interface can be customized differently in each system, but the above is the standard type of layout.

**Moodle Interface: Student View**

Grades, Edit Profile

First block includes links to course resource pages e.g. syllabus, instructor home page.

Interface set up in form of course schedule so that there is one “block” per class: within this instructor has created links to different activities & assignments

Calendar w/ course events highlighted

Links to groups of activities (e.g. link to assignments shows all on one page)
Web CT Interface: Student view

WebCT Training course
Discussion forum

Moodle

WebCT

Q & A forum: can set so that in order to see others’ responses, you must first post your answer.

Although the list of posts is shown, only one post can be seen at a time (so you can’t see the content of the original post).

A way around this is to click on the button to display complete thread, but then the “threads” are lost (unlike indents in Moodle).
Moodle discussion forum

Very similar to WebX:

• photo (or avatar) of participant next to post

• Entire discussion can be read (all posts visible), with indents to show threads/nested view

Settings for Moodle Forum

Many options for forum settings including:

• RSS feed
• Subscribing
• Rating of posts by everyone or just instructor
• groups
Email Digest of Moodle Discussion Forum

- As can be done in WebX, Moodle users can subscribe to forums --> these are sent to you as email.
- You can read the posts in your email without having to go to Moodle
- If you wish to reply, clicking on the Moodle "reply" link will take you to that exact post within the Moodle forum.

Chat (synchronous)

Moodle chat has basic text chat functions, plus photos/avatars; also can save chat transcript for later viewing.

WebCT chat has basics plus: white board, raise hand, view & print chat log.
Moodle Choices (like online clickers)

Moodle Glossaries

- Students participate in a course by researching ideas and defining them in a common glossary.
- Glossary items can be grouped in categories.
- Participants can comment on glossary entries.
- Entries can be rated using teacher-defined scales.
- Glossaries can be easily exported and imported via xml.
- Student entries can be previewed by instructors before publishing.
- Glossaries can be fully searched.
- Glossaries can be viewed with different display formats.
Grades

Both have built-in gradebooks (this is Moodle’s)

Moodle Online Reports
Resources

• Moodle:
  – UMD Faculty information: http://www.d.umn.edu/itss/etrg/moodle/FacultyInformation.html

• WebCT:
  – http://webct.umn.edu/