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EdLab Technical Report



Collaboration Support System: Fall 2005 Semester Report

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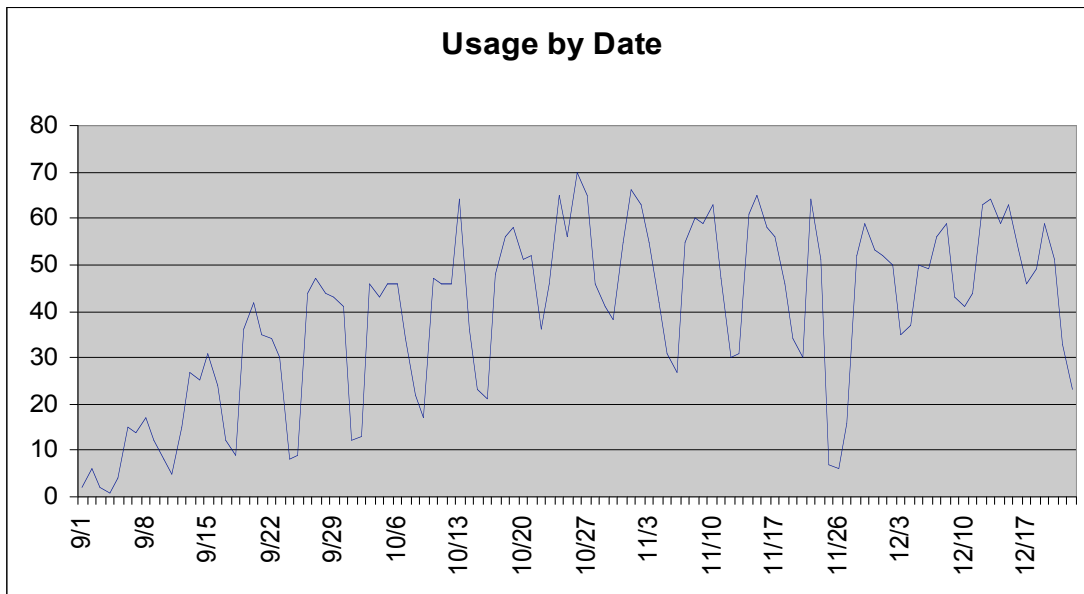
1. OVERVIEW

The Collaboration Support System (CSS) has been in use for a full semester, and this report aims to review the usage of the system in order to determine what worked well, what did not, and what changes can be made in the future. Section 2 will go through the usage data for the fall semester. The breakdown of usage by user identity will be presented in Section 3. General conclusions from the data will be discussed in Section 4, and recommendations for changes will be presented in Section 5.

2. FALL SEMESTER USAGE

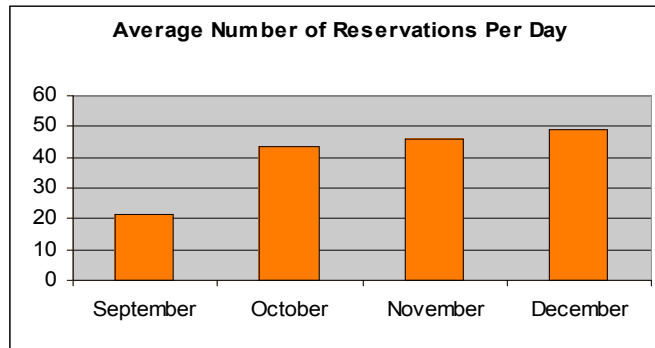
Usage of the CSS generally rose throughout the semester, and when diverging from these patterns, explanations are easily found in the academic calendar. Usage by date is shown below in Figure 1. Note that the high point of the entire semester occurred on October 27th, the midterm date. Dips in the pattern occur mostly on weekends, with the notable exception of the Thanksgiving holiday, during which the library was closed.

Figure 1



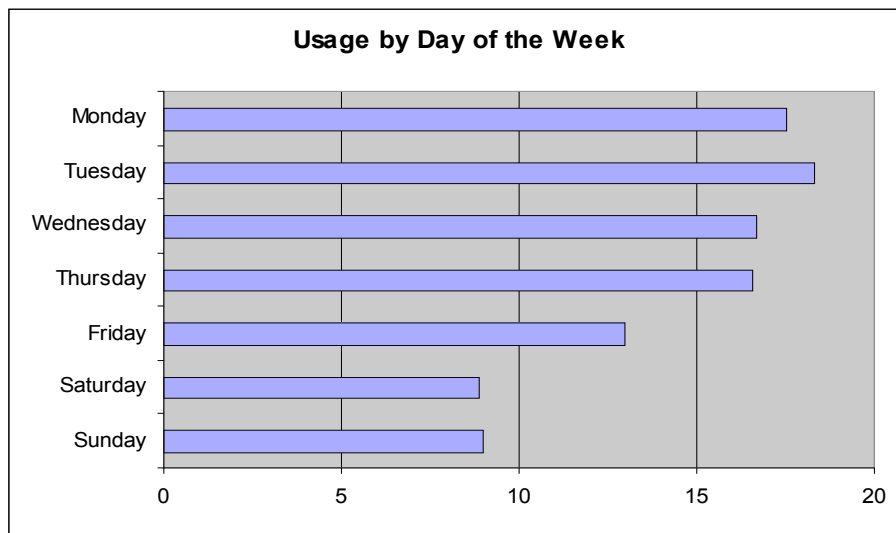
Although it seems that reservations hit a plateau right after the midterm date, when the academic calendar is taken into account, it is clear that reservations in fact, rose throughout the semester. Figure 2 below shows the average number of reservations per day in each successive month of the fall semester. It is clear that daily reservations rose throughout the semester, and in fact, there were large blocks of time in December for which every room was reserved.

Figure 2



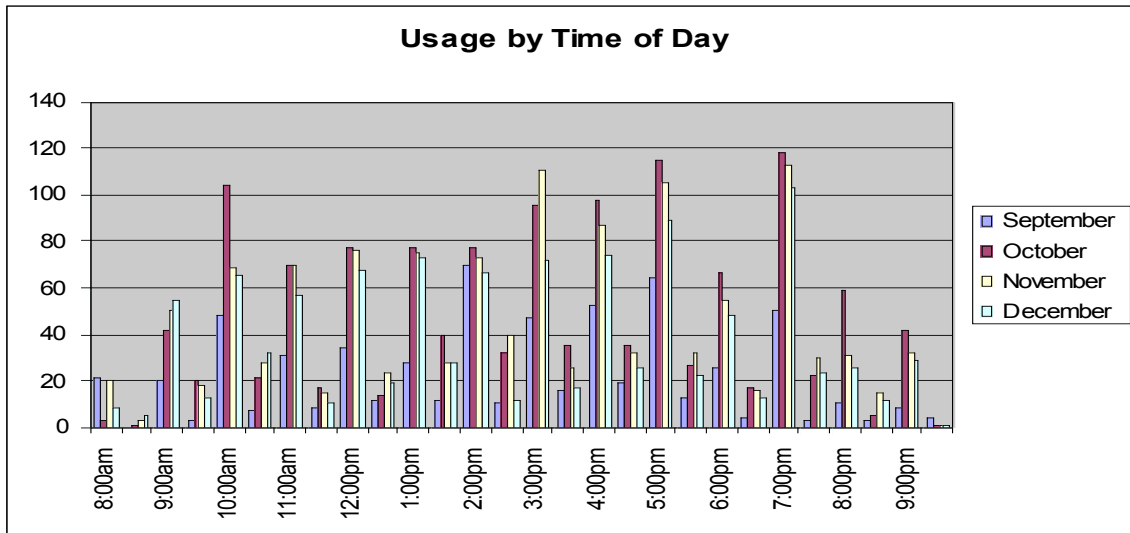
As seen in Figure 1, above, reservations dip every weekend. This is to be expected, as many students come to Teachers College only on those days that they have class. Figure 3 below shows the average reservations by day of the week. Tuesday was the most popular day for reservations, but only marginally so. In fact, Monday through Thursday were all relatively popular, with reservations falling Friday and then more drastically into Saturday and Sunday.

Figure 3



That reservations correlate to days in which classes are held is to be expected. Also notable is the fact that reservations seem to pattern around the hours classes are generally offered. Figure 4 below shows reservations by time of day for each of the four months of the fall semester. Although the October data shows a spike at 10:00am, for most of the fall semester, reservations rose sharply at 3:00pm, 4:00pm, 5:00pm, and 7:00pm, all times right before or right after most classes are scheduled. Interestingly, users show an inclination towards starting their reservations on the hour, as opposed to the half-hour. More than three-quarters of reservations are made to start at the top of the hour.

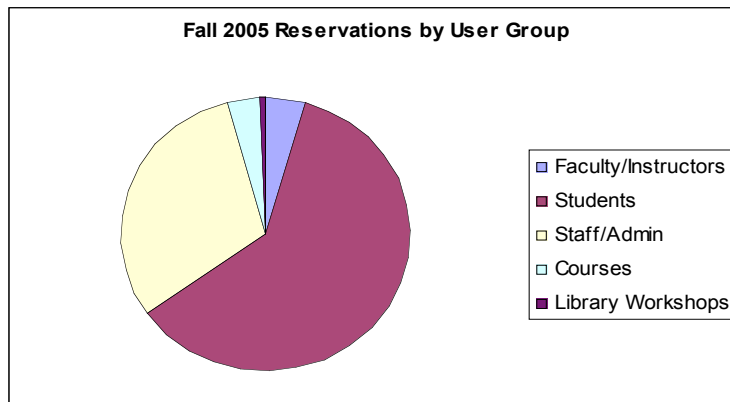
Figure 4



3. FALL SEMESTER USERS

The CSS is used by faculty, staff, and students, and also accommodates courses and library workshops. The usage by group was fairly consistent each month of the fall semester, with students accounting for more than half of all reservations for each month. This may even be an underestimation of the usage by students, given that many students also hold positions throughout the college, and are listed as staff in the directory. Figure 5 below shows the breakdown of usage by user group for the entire fall semester. As seen for each individual month, students are the largest user group, accounting for just over 60% of all reservations made during the fall semester. Staff/Administration are the second largest user, accounting for 30% of all fall reservations. The final three groups (Faculty/Instructors, Courses, and Library Workshops) each accounted for less than 5% of all reservations made during the fall.

Figure 5



Although Figure 5 above may show students as the largest user group of the CSS, looking at the most frequent and the most time intensive users shows a different story. For the list of the most frequent users (most reservations over the course of the semester) as well as the list of most time intensive users (most hours reserved over the course of the semester), staff take up four of the five top spots. Figure 6 below shows the top ten most frequent users and Figure 7 shows the top ten most time intensive users.

Figure 6 Top Ten Most Frequent Users

Name	Role	Affiliation	Reservations
Brian Krawczyk	Staff	Library Admin	607
Maria Jimenez	Staff	Housing & Residence Life	82
Karla Diaz Hadzisdikovic	Staff	Int'l & Transcultural Ed	46
Marie Keem	Student	Comparative & International Ed	44
Makiko Yoshino	Staff	IUME	40
Dwindally Rosado Rivera	Student	Applied Psychology	34
Jeong Seog Song	Student	Columbia Business School	34
Leslie Williams	Student	Higher & Post-Secondary Ed	22
Xin Bai	Staff	MST	20
Pamathi Somasundaram	Student	TESOL	19

Figure 7 Top Ten Most Time Intensive Users

Name	Role	Affiliation	Hours
Brian Krawczyk	Staff	Library Admin	4331
Maria Jimenez	Staff	Housing & Residence Life	300.5
Xin Bai	Staff	MST	142.5
Makiko Yoshino	Staff	IUME	133
Leslie Williams	Student	Higher & Post-Secondary Ed	113.5
Marie Keem	Student	Comparative & International Ed	91.5
Dwindally Rosado Rivera	Student	Applied Psychology	89
Jennifer Govan	Staff	Library Admin	69
Sung-Jee Bak	Student	Ed. Psych. - Human Cog. & Ed.	66
Jeong Seog Song	Student	Columbia Business School	34

Brian Krawczyk shows up at the most frequent and the most time intensive user. Although this makes sense, it may suggest that many users are hidden under his reservations. Who is he reserving the rooms for? Why aren't they reserving the rooms themselves? Eight of the users appear on both lists: four students and four staff members. Interestingly, a non-TC student is one of these eight. The CSS seems to allow anyone with a UNI and password to reserve rooms, and it was only discovered that non-TC users were doing so because this Columbia Business School student reserved rooms with such frequency as to appear on the top ten lists. The senior management of the library may want to consider whether they wish to limit usage of the system to members of the Teachers College community.

4. SERVICE REQUESTS

Overall, it seems that the services offered through the CSS are not being used as intended. More than half of all users requested “Meeting Supplies”, leaving “pens, pencils, paper” in the box. None of these requests were fulfilled, but users continued to check the box month after month. It is unclear whether it is appropriate for the library to provide these types of materials, with the possible exception of large meetings where a special arrangement has been made with the user.

Fourteen total requests for Facilitation Support were made over the course of the fall semester, and we may presume that almost all were erroneous. Several users responded to the initial email from the Collaborative Solutions Group (CSG) indicating that this was the case, and the others simply failed to respond to the initial email. One user who requested facilitation met with the head of the CSG, but his needs had little to do with meeting support. Most users seem to think that Facilitation Support is related to technical support.

E-Collaboration was not utilized by many users of the CSS. Although there is a small explanation of e-collaboration on the initial page of the CSS, it seems that many users do not even look at the left side of the screen, as an explanation of facilitation support is also posted there.

Technology requests rose throughout the semester, and these needs are presumably being met by the Library Support group, but there is at present no real way of verifying that this is the case (with the exception of outright complaints).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Usage continued to rise throughout the Fall 2005 Semester, culminating in an average of 49 reservations per day in December. It is likely that it will become harder and harder for users to find open rooms, and some sort of weighted system may need to be devised (e.g. priority given to faculty and students). It may also make sense to allow staff to make reservations more freely before 3:00pm, but then place certain restrictions on their ability to do so after 3:00pm. Additionally, as noted in section 3, usage of the CSS may be restricted to members of the Teachers College community.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Certain alterations to the CSS may make the services offered by the library groups better understood by the general TC community. The opening page of the CSS in particular could be altered to be more attuned with usage patterns. (Please see Appendix A for a run-through of the reservation system.) The “Featured Room” section does not seem to serve any particular function, as users are not able to request particular rooms even if they wished to. The blue block titled “Book a Room” should take up the entire first page.

Users should be given the option to view the availability of a particular room if they wish, or to have a room assigned automatically based on their schedule needs. Instead of the sections describing e-collaboration and facilitation on the left side, next to the option of each could be a hyperlinked “What is this?” that would open another window with an explanation. It may also be helpful to provide a list of equipment that may be checked out from the Public Services Desk on this initial page. In this way, users can become more autonomous, and the Library Support Group can spend more time on the maintenance of library equipment.

When the system is full, it should tell the user why they are unable to reserve a room. A common reason for being unable to book a room is that the system will not allow the request. There should be information on the site about how far in advance rooms can be booked, the maximum duration of a reservation, the maximum capacity of our rooms. If nothing else, it could say something like, “If you wish to reserve a room (this much) in advance or for (this many) people, please contact Christine Epting directly at laomilbankassociate@tc.edu to discuss your needs.” Also, users began to email requests when all rooms were booked late in the semester, thinking something was wrong with the system, when in fact there was simply no availability. If the system explained to users why their request was not met, this would eliminate some confusion.

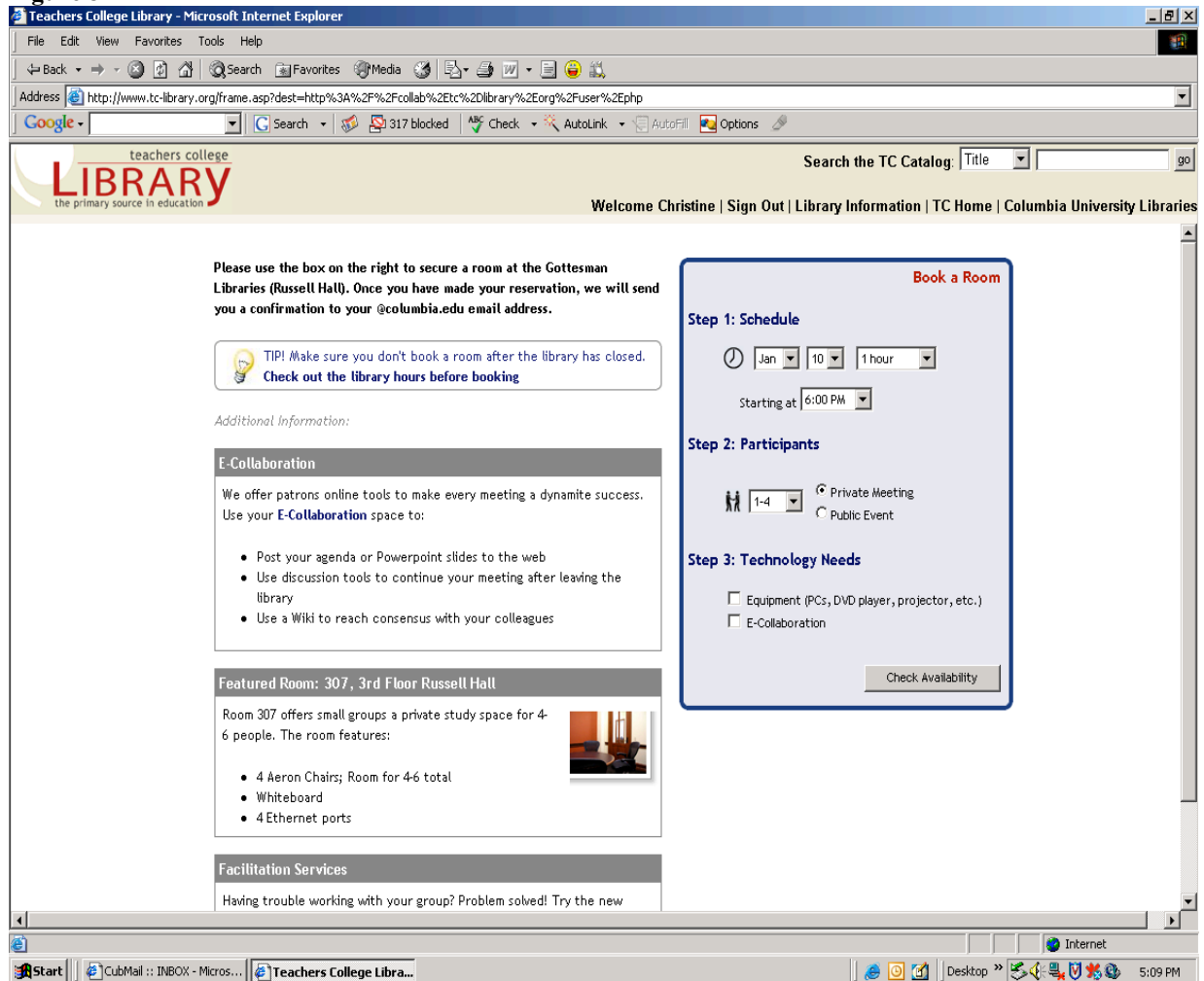
Another proposed change which may alleviate some of the over-booking relates to the ability to cancel reservations. At present, users are sent an email message confirming their reservation, and are provided with a link in order to cancel the reservation, should the need arise. Most users delete this email (anecdotal evidence), and so are unable to cancel requests even if they wished to. Users should be able to sign in to the library homepage and view their current reservations. They would be able to edit and/or cancel these requests on this page.

In order to assess user satisfaction, we might also wish to add an evaluation to this page. Users could rate the usefulness of the system, and whether their requests were met adequately. Alternatively, we might place an evaluation/suggestion box at the Public Services Desk where patrons could comment anonymously on the fulfillment of their requests.

Appendix A: Reservation Procedure

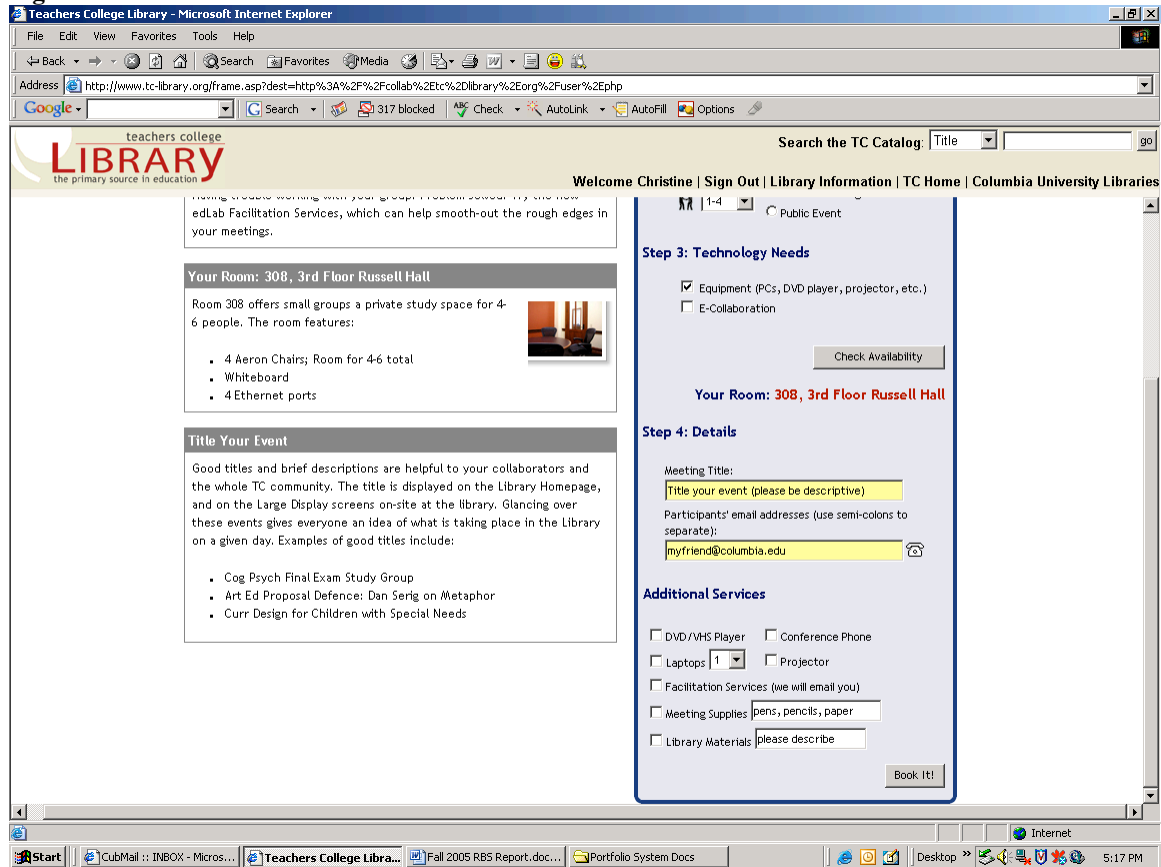
After clicking on *Reserve Group Study Rooms & Classrooms* under *Collaborative Solutions*, users are prompted to enter their CUNIX ID and password. They are then directed to the screen shown below as Figure 1.

Figure 8



Once the user has chosen a date and time for their meeting (Step 1), set the number of participants and decided whether it is a private or a public meeting (Step 2), and checked off whether they need *Equipment* or *E-Collaboration* (Step 3), they are assigned a room, and Step 4 (*Details*) and *Additional Services* appear, as shown in Figure 2 below. Under *Details*, the user can title their event as they wish, and send e-mail invitations or reminders to the participants. Short descriptions of *E-Collaboration* and *Facilitation Services* are provided on this screen as well.

Figure 9



Under *Additional Services*, users can specify their technological needs, and request facilitation services, meeting supplies, and library materials. A short description of the assigned room is given on this screen, as well as tips for titling the event.

After clicking *Book It!*, the user is shown a confirmation that their room has been booked and redirected to the library homepage. An email is sent to the user, as well as any participants listed in Step 4. The email to the user includes a link to cancel the reservation.