Committee on Academic Technology
Minutes
March 24, 2017

Members Present:  Gary Krenz, Tom Wirtz, Mark Johnson, Kevin Rich, Richard Taylor, Kathy Lang (Anne Deahl as guest)

The meeting began promptly at 1:30 PM. A review of the minutes from the February 24, 2017 meeting was postponed due to the lack of a quorum.

Anne Deahl kicked off the discussion with a presentation on the Accessible Electronic Technology Initiative, which is under her responsibility under direction of Provost.

Goal: Assess and enhance accessibility of digital experiences.

Why: Desire to be inclusive, especially given Marquette’s Jesuit heritage. Furthermore, the ADA requires accessible courses, which means this is a legal issue.

Large academic institutions like Harvard, UPenn have gone through this, which means that Marquette does not need to start from scratch because there are examples to rely on. There are also Guidelines called WCAG 2.0AA that help to guide compliance efforts. This will tell us what standards to follow.

Who: This impacts visually impaired students, and those that are hearing impaired. This will also help people who don't have declared disabilities, but will benefit from this.

Responsibility: Everyone!

Impacted: D2L, Checkmarq, webpages, online courses, in-class materials, video & audio, software.

History: The issue came to light during Summer 2015 when a student took an online history course and couldn’t access materials for her class on her preferred mode of communication (Laptop as opposed to iPad). Marquette brought in a firm named Deque to assess our accessibility, which was scored at 29% (fairly typical for an institution at this stage).

Response: A formal policy will be implemented in September 2017, with some time for roll out. Calling for webpages to be in compliance as they are migrated to new CMS. New material for fall must be done in an accessible format, with existing content converted over by Fall 2020. Special accommodations will be made as necessary to meet immediate student needs.

Gary inquired whether this applies to internal software packages like MyJob. Kathy suggested this isn’t really the way to think about this, because there are things that are inside/outside our firewall.
Mark asked for clarity on September 2017 pronouncement, and one focus is on getting video content captioned in advance. Anne advocated for training resources, which will be led by the CTL. A GROW/IT Services seminar on 4/13 related to how to create an accessible pdf is in the works.

Richard asked for clarity that this is a long-term project, with everything needing to be done by September 2017. Anne suggested the answer is no, that this is an incremental process.

Gary asked whether Follett addresses text accessibility issues? Perhaps textbook accessibility is something that should be considered in advance rather than requiring special processing by the Office of Disability Services.

Tom asked for a concrete document of things to be checked, and the resources. Anne discussed that this will be something that be posted to the accessibility website, which is scheduled to launch next week. Once the website is launched, it will be shared with the CAT.

Gary discussed that there are last-second changes to instructors. Will there be a crisis team to help with emergencies? Anne suggests that perhaps it makes sense to assess whether a student needing accommodation is in the course, and ODS will provide support as needed. If not, then it may be possible to expect ADA compliance for that course at a later date.

Tom asked about guest lecturers – may have to work with them in advance. This could be difficult in some colleges.

Next steps: Read policy, evaluate your own materials, get involved with IT services as needed.

Kathy inquired about Office of Marketing and Communications – there is an individual who is the OMC person for this.

Anne suggested that accessibility is something that should be considered when deciding on a software provider.

Richard suggested that given the uncertainty over the UCCS for Fall 2018, this is going to be another shock that will be hard to deal with for many faculty, especially in Arts & Sciences. Anne suggested that if a course that is currently being taught that will never be taught again, then perhaps it makes sense to put digital ADA accessibility consideration of that course on hold and treated them on a case-by-case basis regarding any students needing accommodation.

Richard inquired about foreign language materials. Does captioning need to be done in English? What about the foreign language? In a medieval history course, there may be some foreign language text that requires students to access a translation? Will there be an accessible translation?
Richard also inquired about externally referenced webpages? Anne suggested that this is something that the library is looking into. Will likely defer to what other institutions have done.

Anne suggested that another question is how to get this information to adjuncts.

Mark discussed the idea of J-term courses, online courses, etc. Anne responded that the CTL has had resources available for several years related to making online courses accessible.

Anne will notify Mark with the address for the new accessibility website when it becomes available.

Mark solicited input from committee members on topics for the last meeting of the year and beyond. Tom suggested that the accessibility issue is a game changer, and something that our committee will really have to be involved in. We need to be involved in communication of the information.

Tom suggested that perhaps accessibility issues is a good topic for the “faculty technology day”.

Gary suggested that perhaps a session in “Conversations on Learning” right before the spring semester starts could be useful. Perhaps we could piggyback on the structure that Arts & Sciences already has in place.

Kathy provided an update on grades interface between D2L and Checkmarq. The technology is fine, but the people, process, etc. is the more complicated issue. Kathy suggested a project team come together to formulate the requirements for a process, which will then need to be approved by the Vice Provost’s office. Who is going to be on this team? Kathy agreed to come up with a list. Gary reminded us that the grading system is changing, and perhaps it makes sense we can build this into the process for the new one.

Gary also suggested we should look into direct links between classroom projectors and tablets. Kathy suggested there is an inventory planned for the summer, which will help identify which resources are available where.

The meeting adjourned at 2:58PM.

Respectfully submitted by Kevin Rich.