RESEARCH

BUILDING A NATIONAL RESEARCH DATA REPOSITORY

A team at the University of Saskatchewan in Research Computing is at the centre of a project to develop the technology for a national research data repository. With funding from both CFI MSI and the Province of Saskatchewan, Compute Canada and the Canadian Association of Research Libraries are collaborating with the U of S team on a two year project to build a scalable national platform for research data management and discovery.

Tri-Council funding agencies state that “Research data resulting from agency funding should normally be preserved in a publicly accessible, secure and curated repository or other platform for discovery and reuse by others.” This includes expectations for researchers to create data management plans, and to provide the necessary metadata to facilitate understanding and reuse.

The pan-Canadian platform being developed will provide tools and services to support the curation, access, discoverability, and preservation of research data, allowing researchers across Canada in a range of disciplines to have access to publicly funded data, addressing a longstanding gap in Canada’s digital research infrastructure. This service will also provide a framework that allows existing and future data repositories to be federated within a coherent system.

For more information on other research computing initiatives see usask.ca/ict/services/research-technologies/index.php.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

TOOLS TO ENHANCE THE CLASSROOM LEARNING EXPERIENCE

ICT recently introduced a new student response system that will be available to use in classrooms on campus this fall. The new system, Top Hat which is replacing the current classroom polling system, is a more robust interactive teaching platform. The new system provides the opportunity for instructors to connect with students through interactive slides, online discussions, polls, videos, customized content and up to six different question types.

The Top Hat system is available at no cost to the student or instructor and does not require the purchase of additional hardware to operate. The web based application is accessible by computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone and eliminates the need for students to purchase clickers to participate in classroom learning activities.

Instructors will receive information over the course of the summer for Top Hat training sessions to allow users the opportunity to get accustomed to the new platform. ICT will continue to provide support for clickers through the 2016-17 academic year for instructors to migrate course materials and become familiarized with the new system.

More information on the Top Hat student response system can be found on the ICT website. Instructors can contact classroom_response@usask.ca if they have questions or would like assistance transitioning their course content to Top Hat.
COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY

What is WebEx?

WebEx is an online web conferencing service provided by the University of Saskatchewan. The platform allows for face-to-face interaction between participants through their computer or mobile device.

What are some of the benefits of using WebEx?

WebEx promotes easy collaboration and file sharing while reducing the dependencies on time and location for scheduled or ad-hoc meetings. Participants can quickly connect with multiple people to host an online discussion or collaborate on documents. The meetings can be one-to-one or include several members at once, which provides a more efficient way for students or colleagues to connect from different locations.

What do I need to get started?

A high-speed internet connection is the only requirement to join or host a meeting with WebEx on a laptop or desktop computer. Mobile participants can join meetings through the WebEx app on their smartphone or tablet from any location.

Is it easy to use?

Whether you are hosting or participating in a meeting with the intuitive WebEx interface participants can get started with just a couple of clicks. Additionally, all U of S WebEx users have access to an online WebEx training course and learning resources located on the ICT website.

Why should I use WebEx over other web-conferencing options?

WebEx is integrated with other U of S technologies and provides a personal meeting room for members of the campus community. Coming this fall, WebEx will be fully integrated with Blackboard, allowing for additional practical applications of the service.

Can I use WebEx to connect with people off-campus or outside the university network?

WebEx users can send a meeting invitation to anyone with an email address. Participants are not required to have a U of S NSID or be on the university network to join a meeting.

Who have been some of the early adopters or users of WebEx on campus?

Some of the greatest uptake of the service has been within the Health Sciences colleges. These colleges routinely webcast lectures and classroom sessions to students and health care practitioners located across the province. Almost immediately after launching WebEx users were able to integrate the service with the College of Nursing and College of Medicine webcasts to provide an additional platform for participants to connect and collaborate, helping to fulfill the university and province's commitment to learning where you live.

Can anyone on campus use it?

WebEx is available to all faculty, staff and students. Users log into PAWS and click on Meetings to get started. Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to try WebEx and explore some of its potential benefits.
ADMINISTRATION

BUILDING BETTER RELATIONSHIPS

University of Saskatchewan departments and colleges will have a new tool in the coming months to assist in their efforts to connect with and attract prospective students. The recruitment module, the first phase of a three module Relationship Management System (RMS) that is designed exclusively for use in higher education, will be a centralized collection point providing university staff with the necessary data to gain fulsome and quick insights into their prospective students. The data collected - ranging from general, personal and academic information to details about services used, preferences, and how, when and by whom an individual was contacted - will help create a complete picture of the individual’s interactions with the university.

Data that currently exists in pockets across campus will now be accessible to predetermined staff members in an up-to-date single location that will reduce the reliance on duplicate systems and redundant processes. This holistic view of the prospective student will allow staff to provide the individual student with the most accurate and relevant information, connect them directly with other university services and provide the information for the university to actively engage with the individual through personalized conversations.

Prospective students will also experience a noticeable improvement to the online application process. Once a new user account is created, prospective students can connect through a single online portal to see the process of an application, find out important deadlines and information, communicate directly with student advisors and connect to other university services within a single environment.

Following the implementation of the recruitment module, an application covering alumni, donors and friends of the university, will be the second phase and will proceed—pending board approval—in late-2017. The final module, designed to support student success and retention is slated for early 2018. Once all three modules are in place the system will work together as a single enterprise-wide system to assist in building lifelong relationships between the university and its key stakeholders. For more information on this initiative please contact rms.team@usask.ca.

ADMINISTRATION

U OF S ACHIEVES HIGH SECURITY COMPLIANCE

The University of Saskatchewan recently received accreditation from the PCI Compliance Data Security Council. Established by major card providers such as VISA, MasterCard, Discovery and American Express, the PCI Data Security Council develops security protocols to increase controls around cardholder data to reduce credit card fraud. The PCI Data Security Standard (PCI DSS) accreditation is granted to organizations that can meet and maintain the stringent PCI DSS compliance standards set by the council.

Upon receiving this accreditation the U of S becomes one of only a few post-secondary institutions in Canada to obtain PCI DSS
compliance. Completion of the PCI DSS Compliance Program was a collaborative initiative between Financial Services and ICT, which involved reviewing the security processes and technologies within units on campus that accept, transmit or store card holder data to ensure they meet the PCI DSS standards.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS ORGANIZATION
SETTING THE DIRECTION FOR IT SERVICES AT THE U OF S

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) recently released the five-year IT strategic plan outlining the vision and direction for the development and implementation of IT systems at the University of Saskatchewan. Developed to provide a unified vision for IT services at the institution, the strategic plan identifies five key priority areas – research, teaching and learning, collaboration and community, administration and information systems organization. Within each of the priorities, a strategic theme was identified along with the specific, measurable goals that will be accomplished to achieve the strategic theme.

The development of the strategic plan required many months of consultation with colleges, council committees, administrative units, faculty members and IT governance committees. ICT is in the process of developing annual plans for each of the priority areas that will provide more detail on specific projects and initiatives that will be undertaken.

The complete 2016-2022 Information Technology Strategic Plan is available to view online on the ICT CIO/AVP website.