

h4ckademic progress report

Dec 1-Mar 1

Phase 1 of the h4ckademic project was dedicated to event planning: developing and hosting three jam sessions for students to come together and share their top apps for getting their academic work done.

Harvard h4ckademic jam session (a)	24 Jan 10:30am -1:30pm	Larsen 214
Harvard h4ckademic jam session (b)	24 Jan 4pm -7pm	Larsen 214
MIT h4ckademic jam session	31 Jan 4pm-7pm	MIT/DIRC

DECEMBER WORK: Developed contacts and partners that were interested in the project and would help broadcast it. At MIT I met with Nicole Henig and Remlee Green who agreed to host a session at MIT as well as to broadcast the jam sessions to the students via the MIT Intercession Activity Program calendar as well as push email announcements via library liaison channels. In parallel, I was also referred to Colleen Kaman, an MIT alumna from the Civic Media Lab, with whom I met and who also connected me to the Civic Media Lab for additional outreach. On the Harvard side I contacted and coordinated with colleagues in media, instructional technology, finance, student employment and student affairs to work on the associated logistics. By the end of December session leaders (expert student users) were locked in, space was reserved, catering order was in and the h4ckademic iSite underway.

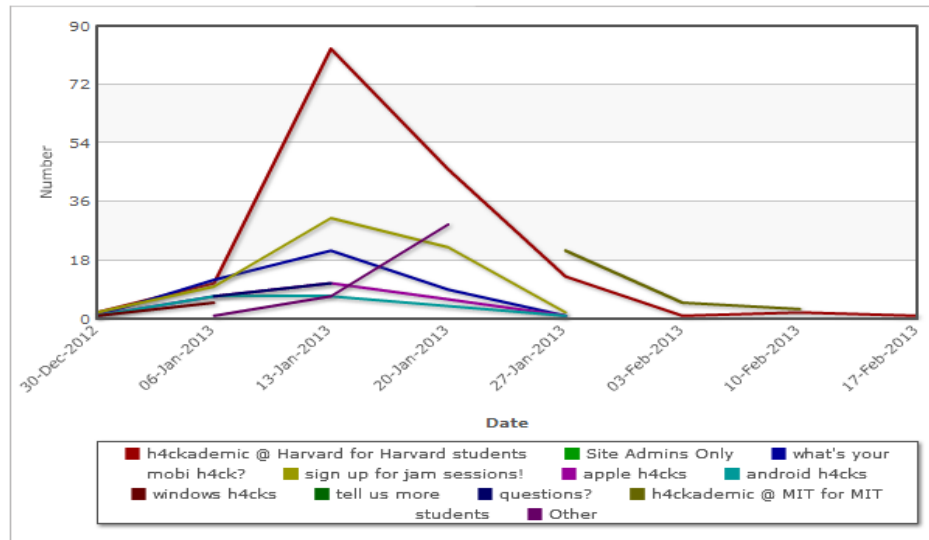
JANUARY WORK: Finalized and prepared communications/marketing content. This involved completing the content on the h4ckademic iSite – which included project summary, session sign up, preliminary background questions, contact information and a forum where those who couldn't attend could share their apps list. The site was constructed to handle both Harvard and MIT constituents. Once the h4ckademic iSite was complete, I finalized the email announcement and started pushing it out. Communication efforts entailed:

- GSE student list-serve
- CODOS (Council of Deans of Students) relay to student-list serves at individual Harvard Schools.
- GSE events for posting to GSE student calendar
- Laura Blake for posting to the Library calendar
- hlcomms list-serve
- local instructional technology colleagues for dissemination to PITF group and other student tech groups
- David Malan, who forwarded on to his CS50 students
- Jeff Goldenson, to forward on to GSD students of Library Test Kitchen
- Also sent direct, personalized reminder announcement to 1000+ students
- MIT library department liaisons' list-serves
- MIT Civic Media Lab list-serve
- Mini posters were also distributed on the GSE campus.

The figure below illustrates traffic to the h4ckademic iSite:

h4ckademic: A Harvard University LibLab Project

Unique Page Accesses by Unique Authenticated Users: By Week



Note: When viewing Page Accesses, the "Other" category represents pages that make up less than 5% of the accesses for the given time frame.

The Sessions: In the end, while traffic to the h4ckademic iSite was low, participation was even lower. At the peak, the sign-up tool showed 7 students signed up for each session at Harvard for a total of 14, while the MIT sign-up tool showed 15. However the actual participant attendance was lower – 2 at each of the Harvard sessions, for a total of 4; 8 at the MIT session – 5 of whom had actually signed up (1 could only stay for first hour), the other 3 were drop-ins.

The combination of low attendance and mixed user levels dictated a different approach so the sessions were shorter and more conversational. The information obtained in terms of apps used to get academic work done is summarized in the figures below.

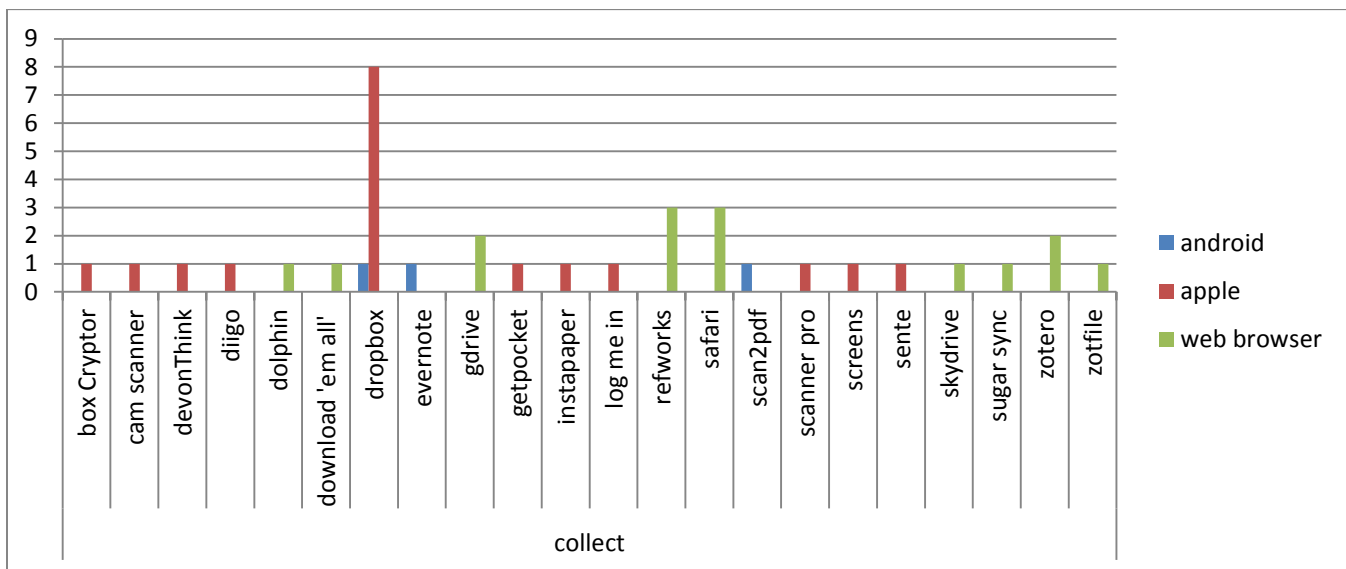


Figure 1: Apps for collecting/organizing

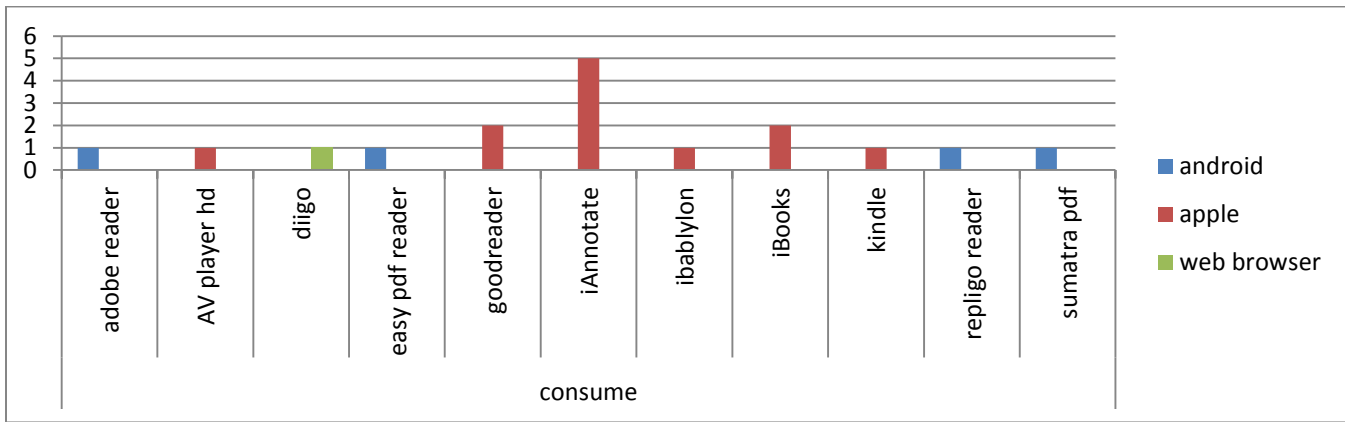


Figure 2: Apps for consuming/reading

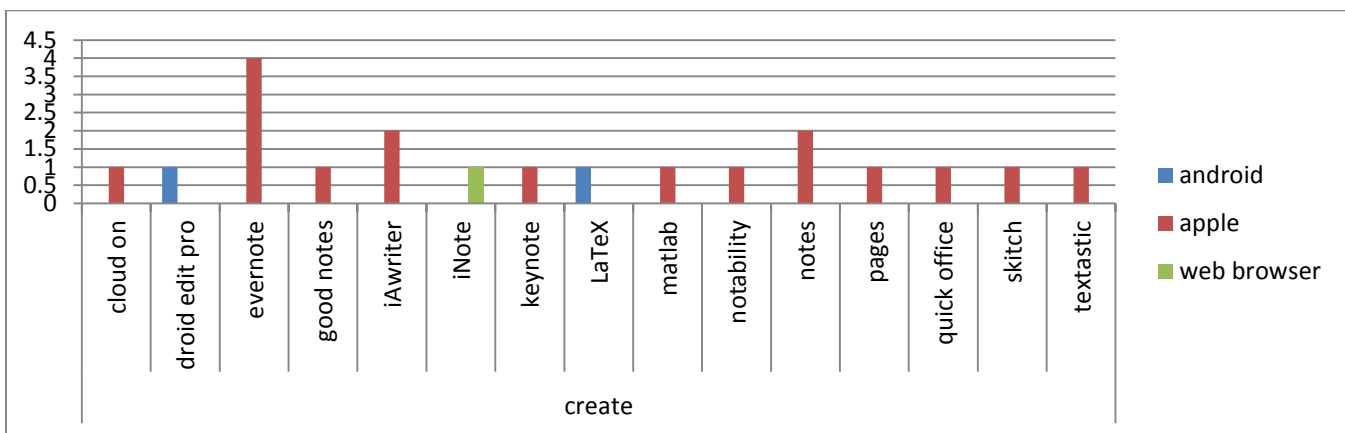


Figure 3: Apps for creating/generating

FEBRUARY WORK. Data compilation, synthesis, status report preparation.

Phase 1 Outcome: Low participation rate yields low data.

The low student participation/interest rate could be indicative of several issues:

1. There is currently no issue to solve
2. Students have figured out their workflow, apps etcetera
3. Students are still primarily using laptops/desktops for core academic work
4. Students are already heavily "sourced" for input, feedback etcetera from a spectrum of University entities
5. Students are over scheduled
6. January is a bad time of the year
7. The session length (3 hrs including free lunch) was too long
8. What students seek or do in terms of mobile tablet or app use is too user-centric for a general session

The data obtained from the participants does not conclusively indicate widespread student need for a tool that would aid student decision-making with regard to the best apps to use for academic work. I think any student looking at the data in its current state would not at all be surprised, or find it useful, to go to a tool to learn that Dropbox, iAnnotate and Evernote are popular apps used by students, though it is possible that students might be interested in apps that are not heavily used – however that could manifest in very, very long list of what I'll call "single hits". Additionally, there is a host of complex issues that hinder the ability to get a clear picture of what students are doing and using in terms of getting their academic work done on a mobile tablet. Below are some of the issues that surfaced in the sessions:

1. Disparity in approach to academic work – unique student study/work style; choppy workflow
2. Difficulty categorizing the basic type of academic work being performed – collect, consume, create
3. Mixed use of multiple devices
4. Hybridized app use -- combination of native and web apps
5. App commitment – constantly searching for a better app
6. Maturation of app market – single apps evolving into a suite of apps to address multiple use
7. App overlap – multiple apps for the same single use

All of the above aside, more data is definitely needed to flesh out these issues. The data must be sufficient in breadth and depth to reflect Harvard and MIT student constituents and their contexts to both prove a need and then meet that need with a solution. This project is ultimately the facilitation of student-to-student information. Input from students is needed to create an output for students.

Next Steps: These are potential avenues to pursue in terms of improving the data set:

1. Follow up with those who responded to the event announcement but could not attend (27)
2. Develop a sample of GSE enrollees (to include cross registrants from HU Schools) for online survey to obtain more data (w/raffle incentive) and launch just before spring break (Mar 14); try CS50 again
3. Survey additional constituencies such as HU library staff, GSE faculty, GSE TFs, abcd-lib; abcd-mobile; abcd-edutech to see if and how their mobile tablet/app use compares to student mobile tablet/app use
4. Convene open meeting/consultation with interested library colleagues for recommendations