h4ckademic final report
15 Nov 13

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

At this juncture the accomplishments I have to report relate more to the journey rather than the destination.

In terms of the "destination" or the project goal to develop a service that students could use to identify best apps for academic use, Infogr.am has proven to be sufficient. Infogr.am was used to prototype a way of virtualizing the little data that was obtained so students could easily refer to it and investigate other students' use of apps for three different use types: collect/organize, consume, create.   The Infogr.am created continues to be linked on the GSE course materials knowledge center and served out to every GSE course iSite. As well the app and use information obtained has also been shared and incorporated by the GSE IT Service Knowledge base for student support. I have also shared the link (which is Harvard viewable) with HKS Librarians who were the only other group interested in taking a look at it. However since most of the students that participated in the workshop/s and survey were primarily GSE students, the use case is limited.   And even in the limited GSE context, there was little student use.

As far as the "journey" or project path, I do register the experience and knowledge gained as another kind of accomplishment, though altogether they may be better relegated to a variety of cautionary tale. At the time of committee evaluation of this proposal, there was concern as to whether sufficient student participation could be obtained. That concern did indeed manifest as the greatest challenge. The student communications and marketing bandwidth across the University and within each School is crammed with an ongoing array of activities and solicitations.   Though an "internal market", competition is fierce for student attention and engagement across campus. The breadth and depth of outreach for project participation was fairly extensive, the return on that outreach was disproportionately low which in turn diminished the data collection needed to develop the tool.   All of that aside, I think there are a few items worth mentioning:

> Engaging students.   Now more than ever before, students have competing needs and interests and every entity on campus is working to meet each and every need and interest.   While all of the administrative effort across campus certainly enhances the student experience, it simultaneously challenges the student schedule.   As well, students do understand the competition for their attention and participation—and in exchange for their time, they want more than food.

> Student information management and workflow.   Students have a variety of learning styles and are constantly responding to external forces in terms of decisions related to information collection, organization and consumption.   What works for students in one month or semester, may change the next semester as they move through various subject areas, course levels, degrees and interactions with different student colleagues, teaching fellows and faculty. Add to those student variables the pace of technological progress in terms of both hardware (mobile devices) and software (cloud services/apps) and one quickly realizes that some type of predictive modeling would be needed to provide solutions for each student's unique ecosystem of problems at any particular point in their academic career.
> We are up against a matrix of viral moving targets.

> Partnerships. As it is with students, so too with staff. As everyone's workload across campus (beyond) continues to compress, it is challenging to validate a problem and then move forward to provide a solution to that problem.   It is also difficult to attract interest and needed expertise in helping to solve a problem when so many colleagues (and students for hire) are already at capacity.

> Problem life-cycle.   When I conceived of this project, I made the case that student-sourcing the solution was the logical path because students solve problems and share solutions with each other every day. Since there are many times more students than library staff, it made sense that collectively students would have developed and shared solutions well before a single librarian might know there was a problem. But how to forecast the life-cycle of any given problem or issue? And which problems warrant the necessary additional resources to solve?

In the final analysis, I think the problem around determining best apps for academic use and figuring out what to recommend was a short-term problem born at the intersection of expanded distribution of, and access to, electronic academic content, evolving expansion of mobile devices, and faculty, students and staff collectively trying to sort through it all.

FUTURE PLANS

Putting all of the above aside for a moment, I expect to continue this effort as I can on my own, locally, though with a broader focus. For one reason or another, I have been involved in or part of information management conversations with IT, faculty and other administrators that connect to my original question around the best apps for academic workflow.   Everyone is overwhelmed by information, the associated files and the management of it all and I see emerging questions and needs beginning to converge.

SPENDING

The expenditures iterated in the attached CREW report reflect expenses for the payment/compensation of January h4ckademic workshop/jam session leaders and assessment coordinator as well as food for 3 workshop/jam sessions and 1 live/in-class survey.

Uche Amaechi	1 workshop session	$ 500
Galen McQuillen	2 workshop sessions	$1000
Karen Dunahm	assessment coordination	$2000
	Compensation Total:	$3500.00
Pizza for h4ckademic jam session (1) hosted at MIT	$ 124.77	
Food for h4ckademic jam sessions (2) hosted at GSE	$ 336.90	
Breakfast for GSE course A027b -- live/in-class survey	$ 342.00	
	Non-comp Total:	$ 803.67
	Total:	**$4303.67**