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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine what choices directors of selected teaching and learning centres in universities made with respect to the design of the homepages of their centre Websites. This was a study to explore how selected directors approach the use and design of their sites, a study to specifically examine what design elements these directors consider in conceptualizing the homepage. The themes of visibility, engagement, and sustainability were used as a framework for the study.

The study used the case study research methodology, examining the perspectives of four directors who were responsible for managing the teaching and learning centres in their respective universities. The study was an opportunity to explore how directors conceptualized the design of the homepages of their centre Websites and what design elements were used.

It was clear that the directors regarded the scholarship of teaching and learning in their own specific ways and that each particular view guided choices regarding homepage design. The directors interviewed regarded the homepage as an important and powerful communication tool and each dedicated resources to its development and ongoing scrutiny.

Directors recognized the variety of user needs they faced and they admitted that the homepage design choices they made was a balancing of constituent needs, institutional priorities, and their professional stance within the scholarship of teaching and learning field. Directors were keen on building internal and external communities. Directors continually asked themselves the question, "What is the user looking for?" Directors spoke of the increasing use they made of technology in the choices regarding the use and design of the homepage. They recognized that building momentum and advocacy within the scholarship of teaching and learning using the homepage was a difficult task.

Directors demonstrated a heightened level of commitment to the scholarship of teaching and learning and to the development and enhancement of teaching practice. They were aware that they made decisions about the tone of the homepage through their management of the use and demand of homepage space. They were continually challenged to stay abreast of the evolving scholarship of the teaching and learning landscape and their style of decision-making was flexible.

Directors play many roles in the administration and management of teaching and learning centres (Cook & Sorcinelli, 2005; Wright, 1999). As a result of this study and the use of the case study method, it is apparent, in the examination of the four cases, that the design of the homepage evolved from the director role as design researcher (Laurel, 2003). Directors epitomized the type of self-reflection that characterizes scholarship generally (Kreber, 2007); these directors were reflective practitioners and researchers in the design of their homepages.

Directors identified the need for increased interactivity on the site and the prominence they believed the site will have in the role of desktop professional training and development of faculty. Examining the implications for future homepage design as the critical mass of scholars in teaching and learning moves through the professional education ranks within and among universities would be an intriguing research topic.

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