ITCO Minutes 2/11/08

Present: Tiff Adkins, Gail Rathbun, Joseph McCormick, Steve Carr, Linda Meyer, Judith Garrison, Lee Peitzman
Absent: Sue Mau, Richard Strong, Eric Vitz,
Resigned: Brandon Smits, Student Representative (no replacement as yet)

Meeting convened at 4 pm in KT 101.

Benefits Bar proposal
George McClellan, Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs, presented “Benefits Bar” which is being considered as a fundraising tool to build a scholarship fund and an emergency fund (Brown Ink Society) for students. Benefits Bar is a toolbar that users may download and add to their browser screens that enables them to search the internet using the Yahoo directory/search engine. The bar may be branded with an organization’s logo. One penny out of the three pennies Yahoo received for every search goes to the fund. Benefits Bar was chosen because it poses the least threat to the security of our LAN. The bar would be part of the browser screen on all student computing lab computers on campus. Staff and faculty would have the option to download the toolbar. The toolbar can also be used to run crawling script to publicize school events and activities. George estimated that, based the experience of other organizations using the Benefits Bar, IPFW could possibly raise $10-15,000/year.

Since the toolbar is based on Yahoo, there will be advertisements displayed. George said that IPFW could request that certain types of ads not be shown.

ITS has been testing the toolbar for any interference with Oasis and Banner. Also, because security levels must be lowered in order to permit its use, ITS is making sure that the system would be secure from malware. Benefits Bar has declared that the toolbar will not encourage spam, spyware, or malware.

Committee members thought in was, in principle, that this was a good way to raise money, but they raised a number of questions about privacy, the quality of the Yahoo search engine for academic work, and the ethics of supporting a commercial venture. Their comments are articulated in Addendum 1 to these notes.

George will be speaking to ACITAS and other faculty and staff committees and units to gather as much input as possible, and gain visibility for the project. The tentative rollout date is March 1st. Linda Meyer commented that no faculty have heard about the Benefit Bar and that the rollout date seemed a little premature.

These URLs were later sent from Joseph via Gail to the committee, who asked to see an example of what the toolbar looks like and how it operates. Addendum 2 shows the Benefits Bar Terms of Agreement.

URL for IPFW download:
http://www.benefitbar.com/benefitbar/subscribe/toolbar.php?toolbarId=745

Privacy Policy:
http://www.benefitbar.com/benefitbar/home/privacy.php
Alfresco File Sharing Software
Jeff Nowak, Associate Professor, Education, demonstrated Alfresco, which he described as corporate open source software. He has been running this software on his own server. He is now using this software to facilitate file-sharing among his Educational Studies students. It has both a drag and drop mode and a Web Dav mode. He has been working with ITS and with Bob Sedlmeyer’s class to test the concept and seek deployment and support by ITS. One of the chief advantages that this system affords is the capability of share files with entities outside of IPFW, a capability that Blackboard Vista is not configured for.

ITCO Report and work plan
Gail highlighted the ITPC requests stemming from the ITCO report that she delivered on 1-17-08. These were:

1. Define a software purchasing process and how to disseminate
2. Work with Susan on defining the responsibilities of an LSP and how to set up new LSPs so that all units have representation
3. Request for $3000 was approved, pending a more detailed proposal

Gail suggested that between now and the next meeting the two sub-committees re-convene to discuss requests 2 and 3, and that request 1 be tabled. The LSP committee is composed of Joseph, Eric, Judith, and Sue. The Instructional Technology Information committee is composed of Gail, Steve, and Tiff.

The next meeting will be at 4 pm on March 17, 2008 in KT 101.

Meeting adjourned at 5:20 pm
IPFW, by adopting and branding the bar, the technology for which is provided by Yahoo, has decided that supporting a commercial venture is OK given that the end is raising money for a charitable cause. That is, IPFW has decided that it is OK to use its name to support Yahoo's advertisers, which is the chief way in which Yahoo makes money. Also, by adding considerable numbers of users to Yahoo's user base through IPFW's sponsorship, the value of the company to its shareholders is enhanced. Yahoo is also able to better market its services to other advertisers, using higher numbers of users. There is an appearance of not doing any harm, and also it seems that rights of individuals are protected.

Another question is: If the IPFW-sponsored benefit bar is downloaded at home to use as a search engine, will Yahoo be presenting the user with the same set of limited ads as would be seen at IPFW, or will the user see ads tailored to the user’s searching, and consequently information is gathered about the user’s interests, the better to present the user with customized ads and such every time the user sits at a home computer. One could feel a little queasy about either having IPFW limit the ads I might see (not the position of the ITCO committee members), or from the opposite point of view, having IPFW be associated with customized advertising to me.

We all use search engines with associated advertising yes, but the situation is different when an institution decides to attach itself explicitly to a particular commercial venture.

Putting the ethical question aside, and somewhat related to Steve's point, is whether Yahoo is the type of search engine that we want to recommend to our students, as having the benefit bar on student lab computers implies. Yahoo is not a search engine that many academics use for academic work, though they might use it for shopping and finding phone numbers. If we were going to recommend a search engine, we would look at Google Scholar. Of course, that does not help raise money, or we would look at academic metasearch engines.

We believe that it is important that all issues be thought through and discussed thoroughly with staff, faculty, and students. This situation is perhaps analogous to inviting Pizza Hut and Subway to our campus, or with having gambling money pay for education, so perhaps the horse is already out of the barn.

GoodTree is another charitable search toolbar has probably already been investigated. Perhaps it has too many security issues or is no longer available, but the advantage is that it operates as a meta search engine, incorporating results from at least three search engines. This factor might somewhat mitigate ethical concerns--at least IPFW is not sponsoring just one commercial venture, Yahoo.

**QUESTIONS (as summarized by Joseph)**
- What kind of data is being collected for each user session?
- A demo would be helpful to the end users. Can you show us what the interface will look like in both web browsers?
- Are there ethics concerns with regard to advertising and the use of this toolbar as "the" source for searches?
- How does it look/operate?
- Is there any personally identifiable information gathered by the company?
- Will there be solicitations via email should I elect to provide my address?
Terms of agreement (must be OK'd prior to download):

ACCEPTANCE OF THE TERMS OF THE USAGE AGREEMENT

Privacy
All information is confidential and there is no SPYWARE, ADWARE, TRACKING or POP-UP'S.

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