

# Technology in the Hearts of the Faculty

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## ABSTRACT

How do we, as technology professionals, get the technology near and dear to our hearts into the hands of the faculty?

People like to stay where they are comfortable, therefore faculty stay immersed in academia, and we stay immersed in technology. Can we expect faculty to visit our world? Or do we intrude upon theirs?

If the goal is to get technology tools into the hands of the faculty, the answer is yes to both.

At Lewis & Clark College we have taken this dual approach. We present ourselves to the faculty by sending them Technology Guides and New Computer Packets. We also invite them into the world of technology with our annual Institute and Showcase.

The *Faculty Technology Guide* is updated and delivered to faculty every year. In only 20 pages it introduces faculty to the IT department, the resources available, how to get training and help and to their Divisional Liaison – the Consultant they can always turn to if they don't know where else to go. The *New Computer Packets* are delivered with every new computer and cover not only the specifications of the equipment but a list of software installed and tips on using the computer, especially when an OS upgrade is involved. These are subtle ways of letting them know that we don't expect them to be experts at everything.

The Showcase, where faculty display what they're doing with computing technology, is designed to show possibilities to other faculty. A few weeks later we follow the Showcase with the Faculty Technology Institute, bringing the faculty into our world and allowing us to guide them through the confusion of technology to find tools that are useful for them.

All of these forms of contact allow us to form relationships with faculty based on mutual respect. These are partnerships in which we bring our respective experience and expertise together.

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## Categories and Subject Descriptors

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As technology professionals we would love to see all of the people we support using technology in efficient and innovative ways. But the problem sometimes is: how do we get them to use technology at all?

At Lewis & Clark College, we have found that staff and students generally come to us. They don't call us only when their computer stops working – they call to get ideas or when they find themselves doing repetitive tasks that they think the computer might be able to do for them. Faculty, on the other hand, tend to stay immersed in academia – teaching and researching the way they always have. By definition, faculty are experts in their academic disciplines, not in technology, so our job is to help them find technology tools and help them use those tools.

In the Client Services division of Information Technology we have developed a variety of techniques to build relationships with faculty that will help us get the technology into their hands. In order to keep communication lines open that will foster future relationships, we use a combination of reaching out to them and gathering them into us.

## 2. REACHING OUT

### 2.1 Presenting Ourselves

Our first step to getting faculty using technology is reaching out to them by letting them know that we are here and by helping them become acquainted with our staff and services. Faculty are immersed in their own academic world maintaining their level of expertise in their field. Some disciplines naturally tend toward using technology in general and computers specifically, but not all.

The *Technology Guide* and *Computer Packets* are a subtle way of letting them know that while they're experts in their field, there are things we as technology professionals can offer them.

## 2.2 Faculty Technology Guide

We have observed over the years that staff readily come to us and ask what services and tools are available while faculty don't tend to think of computers as a tool that can help them do their jobs. While we may eventually create a *Staff Technology Guide*, the target audience for our first *Guide* was faculty: we wanted to introduce them to all of the resources that are available to them so that we can get them to take advantage of those resources.

Knowing that very few people are likely to sit down and read a book on computing resources, we decided to create a "guide" that would be limited to about twenty pages and would be more a list of "teasers" than an in-depth guide to **everything**. For example, in the Software section faculty will find a list of our supported software, a summary of site-licensed software and how to get the software they need. We didn't waste space on detailed instructions on using any particular program or accomplishing a specific task. We did include a section about training and learning options and another section listing various ways and places to get help.

The detailed table of contents, general formatting (bold headings, short paragraphs) and the conciseness seem to have made a readable, usable guide that has earned many compliments.

A 20-page guide is more manageable for us, too! By including only basic information and directing faculty to where to find out more, there is less to update every year and we don't have to worry about details being obsolete as soon as they're printed. The *Guide* includes many references to Web pages, which are easier to update than printed material, and to people. (We don't include any specifications for currently supported hardware but we do let them know where to get that information.)

The *Faculty Technology Guide* is updated each summer, printed and delivered to faculty in their annual packets.

## 2.3 New Computer Packets

The *New Computer Packets* are delivered with every new computer and cover the specifications of the equipment as well as a list of software installed and tips on using the computer, especially when an OS upgrade is involved.

Since faculty and staff alike are using their computers and the associated programs and utilities more, the rapid and sometimes dramatic changes in hardware and software often lead to confusion when they get a new computer. Again, staff are more likely to call for help while faculty are more likely to struggle through it alone. Since we're trying to keep faculty from being frustrated with technology, and therefore avoiding it, we needed a way to ease the transition. The *New Computer Packets* seem to fit that requirement.

The first few pages of the *Packets* include installation checklists that are probably as helpful to us as to the computer user (files transferred, network connections verified, printers set up, etc.) but we have included basic hardware specs and standard software lists to help them 'get to know' their new machine. In order to help them find things, we have included diagrams pointing out the location of the power and CD eject buttons for the new iMacs and pointing out the floppy and ZIP drives on the Dell towers.

The rest of the packet includes help sheets on basics like *Getting Started with OS X* or *Getting Started with Windows XP* and

*Burning a CD* and information on our Training Program. As with the *Technology Guide*, we don't want to inundate them with information but we want to acknowledge that they won't automatically know everything about this new equipment on their desks.

The *New Computer Packets* are fairly small, but leaving them in a brightly colored envelope on the user's desk with the new computer makes a big impact.

## 3. PULLING THEM IN

### 3.1 Inviting them into Our World

Sending out the *Technology Guide* and the *Computer Packets* has certainly helped faculty feel more comfortable calling us for help and advice, but we want the relationship to go further than that: we want faculty to think about technology and how it can help them (not just know who to call when their computer stops working).

We need to bring the faculty into our world of technology so we can help them see possibilities and find tools that will work for them – at whatever level they are comfortable.

### 3.2 Faculty Technology Showcase

Our annual *Faculty Technology Showcase* provides an arena for faculty to demonstrate how they are using technology. The goal is to have a wide variety of presenters including those who are using technology intensively as well as those who have only just begun to use technology in their classes.

The *Showcase* is scheduled for one of the Reading Days at the end of Spring Semester every year. We invite 10 to 12 faculty presenters, starting with those who have received money for investigating software from the Instructional Software Fund<sup>1</sup>. We've had faculty present projects that began during a *Faculty Technology Institute* and projects they've done in collaboration with someone in IT. We take advantage of this event to foster more IT/faculty partnerships by assigning a Consultant to each presenter. The IT Consultant and faculty presenter work together to create a title and write a description for the project. We then do the printing of handouts and posters and the setup of computers and any other hardware so that participants just have to show up and be willing to share.

We also make sure to include an IT table that allows us to share some of our projects and any new resources available to faculty.

The trick is getting faculty to attend! We send personalized, hand-addressed invitations a week or so before the event. The faculty chairman of the Education Technology Committee sends e-mail to the faculty mailing list on the morning of the *Showcase*. The invitations include information about who is presenting and the enticement of "refreshments to be served". (Prior attendees know that at this high-class affair, "refreshments" means wine, cheese and various hors d'oeuvres – you might be surprised how quickly this 'inside information' spreads!)

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<sup>1</sup> This is an annual process where faculty can request funds to try out new software to be used in/for their curriculum. This fund has been used to purchase everything from Dreamweaver and Photoshop to very specific language software.

Many faculty now anticipate the *Showcase* each Spring. Some people look forward to finding out what their colleagues are doing while others stop by for a glass of wine and end up discovering something new and exciting.

The *Showcase* has been a great way to highlight technology use on campus and provides a relaxed atmosphere for faculty to talk with their peers about technology and for us to talk with faculty who we might not normally see. It's exciting to see someone approach a colleague or one of us with "Wow! Can I do that, too?"

### 3.3 Faculty Technology Institute

A week after final exams we offer our annual *Faculty Technology Institute* that brings faculty fully into our world of technology. In addition to mailing out fliers we display signs and brochures at the *Showcase*. Like the *Showcase*, we can't force faculty to come but we have found that the enticements of dedicated time from the IT Consultants and free breakfasts and lunches for a week brings in about 20 faculty each year.

The first Institute was held in May 2000 and came about when we noticed that faculty weren't taking advantage of our regular training program. We tried a variety of methods for scheduling, looked at the workshops we were offering, etc. and finally came to the conclusion that the best option was to do something just for them. To make it more attractive, we decided on a week-long cross between a conference and summer camp with a combination of learning time and working time, dividing each day into morning workshops followed by lunch and then project time.

We offer two, 1 hour and 15 minute workshops each morning and allow faculty to choose from 4 options for each session. Workshops are divided into 4 tracks (in 2003 we had *Web Publishing*, *Building Blocks*, *Info Mining* and *Cool Tools & New Technology*) so that faculty can follow one theme all week or pick and choose workshops to suit their needs.

For afternoon project time, IT Consultants work one-on-one or in small groups with faculty on their individual projects. Project time can be used to go into more depth on one of the morning workshops, discussing aspects of an individual's Web site or helping the faculty member get started on their first PowerPoint presentation.

One of the few things that we ask of the participants is that they fill out an evaluation. We have received a lot of positive feedback and we have learned that they appreciate the social time at breakfast and lunch as much as the workshops and project time. Sometimes faculty meet by chance when they sit down for their morning coffee and bagel but frequently they'll start conversations based on what they saw someone working on the day before. A lot of new and innovative ideas have come out of this sharing.

We have a number of faculty who have returned so that they can attend workshops that they couldn't work into their schedule the first time around and just for the opportunity to commune with colleagues.

## 4. MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

The week-long *Faculty Technology Institute* is probably the most important factor in forming the partnerships that we have with faculty. During the week they are each assigned an IT Partner – their partner is who they work with and receive support from during project time. Throughout the week we emphasize that we are not just partners for the Institute, the partnership lasts beyond the week.

After investing so much in establishing these relationships, it's worth the effort to maintain them. Following the Institute, we call "our" faculty to check in on them. We make sure they have the tools and resources they need to finish the project(s) they started during the Institute and talk with them to find out where they want to go next.

Many faculty also have found these partnerships important and some of them will stop by our offices just to say hello and see what's new. We know we have succeeded in reaching someone when they send e-mail to brag about the Web site they've just put up for a new class or when they call to discuss possibilities for disseminating course reading packs to their students.

We also keep our partners in mind when it comes time to invite faculty to participate in the *Showcase* and, while not all relationships remain active, the faculty we have connected with tend to feel more comfortable calling for advice and help.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

All of these forms of contact allow us to form relationships with faculty based on mutual respect: partnerships in which we bring our respective experience and expertise together.

We know that some faculty don't want be computer experts. While many of them do eventually gain some independence, they like to know that they always have someone to call when they need help or advice. By being supportive and creating that comfort zone, we can get the technology into their hands, offices and classrooms.

## 6. REFERENCES

Information Technology Web Site:

<http://www.lclark.edu/~infotech>

IT Training Program Web Site:

<http://www.lclark.edu/~training>

Faculty Technology Institute Web Site:

<http://www.lclark.edu/~infotech/fti>