

Dan Cohen's Digital Humanities Blog » Blog Archive » The Strange Dynamics Of Technology Adoption And Promotion In Academia

Kudos to [Bruce D'Arcus](#)^[1] for writing [the blog post](#)^[2] I've been meaning to write for a while. Bruce notes with some amazement the resistance that free and open source projects like Zotero meet when they encounter the institutional buying patterns and tech evangelism that is all too common in academia. The problem here seems to be that the people doing the purchasing of software are not the end users (often the libraries at colleges and universities for reference managers like EndNote or Refworks and the IT departments for course management systems) nor do they have the proper incentives to choose free alternatives.

As Roy Rosenzweig and I noted in *Digital History*,^[3] the exorbitant yearly licensing fee for [Blackboard](#)^[4] or [WebCT](#)^[5] (loathed by every professor I know) could be exchanged for an additional assistant professor—or another librarian. But for some reason a certain portion of academic technology purchasers feel they need to buy something for each of these categories (reference managers, CMS), and then, because they have invested the time and money and long-term contracts on those somethings, they feel they need to exclusively promote those tools without listening to the evolving needs and desires of the people they serve. Nor do they have the incentive to try new technologies or tools.

Any suggestions on how to properly align these needs and incentives? Break out the technology spending in students' bills ("What, my university is spending *that much* on Blackboard?")?

This entry was posted on Monday, November 5th, 2007 at 1:25 pm and is filed under [Academia](#)^[6], [Libraries](#)^[7], [Open Source](#)^[8], [Tools](#)^[9]. You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#)^[10] feed. You can leave a response^[11], or [trackback](#)^[12] from your own site.

References

1. [^ Bruce D'Arcus](#) (netapps.muohio.edu)
2. [^ the blog post](#) (netapps.muohio.edu)
3. [^ Digital History](#), (www.dancohen.org)
4. [^ Blackboard](#) (www.blackboard.com)
5. [^ WebCT](#) (www.webct.com)
6. [^ View all posts in Academia](#) (www.dancohen.org)
7. [^ View all posts in Libraries](#) (www.dancohen.org)
8. [^ View all posts in Open Source](#) (www.dancohen.org)
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