Gauging Your Technology Skills: Improvement Plan

Learning Management System Competency

1. Based on your responses to the questions related to using a learning management system, how competent are you in terms of using a learning management system?

    My answers to all survey questions in this section were all in the "very skilled" range, except for three items: 1) **Create assessments, surveys, and/or polls**; 2) **Create blogs, wikis and/or chat sessions**; and 3) **Configure and utilize the grade book**, in which I selected "*Some skills for this task.*"

    When it comes to the first two items, the key reason is that we use separate software for these functions that offers more features than those in our LMS (D2L). For example, to conduct surveys we use **Qualtrics**, a robust research software tool that lets us use more types of questions, offers advanced statistical functions, and includes several types of data visualization options, that the very basic surveys in our LMS do not support. Similarly, for course-related blogs and Wiki-style communications, we use **WordPress** and (campus-supported) **Piazza.com** as tools of choice. As a result, I do not use the built-in LMS tools for these functions often. When it comes to a grade book, I can manage 90% of requests, but prefer to refer very complex issues to one of my LMS expert colleagues simply to minimize the chances for any serious mistakes, especially that we often respond to requests from faculty for complex grade adjustments in large-enrollment (150+ students) sections.

2. What priority do you place on improving your Learning Management System Competency (High, Medium, or Low) and why?

    I prioritize improving my LSM competency as **high**. Our entire 40K-student campus is in the process of transitioning to Canvas as our only LMS (from both D2L and Moodle used by different colleges, schools, or departments). Because presently we supplement some weaker D2L features using other software (WordPress, TopHat, Piazza.com, Qualtrics), I want to reach a high level of competency and an in-depth knowledge of Canvas features, to be able to advise our faculty on the instructional technology tools that best fit their needs. I need to be able to advise, with confidence, when we need to explore non-LMS tools, and when what Canvas offers is appropriate and sufficient for the task.

3. How do you plan to improve your Learning Management System Competency?

    I have already taken several workshops on using Canvas, including a half-day workshop at the Distance Education Conference in Madison, WI last summer. I also plan to take advantage of Canvas video tutorials/courses offered online by www.lynda.com, to which my campus subscribes. Additionally, I and my departmental colleague with whom I will share LMS-related responsibilities, already participate in several LMS transition groups

on campus, to share experiences and be better prepared for any potential challenges. Finally, Instructure, the company that makes Canvas, has extensive online resources (at https://guides.instructure.com/), including a detailed manual, so I have diverse and sufficient resources to proceed.

Computer Competency

1. What was your Computer Competency score?
   My **Computer Competency** score was **100%** (with a QM national average at 79%).

2. What priority do you place on improving your Computer Competency (High, Medium, or Low) and why?

   Even with a 100% score, I place a **very high** priority on maintaining and continually improving my computer competency, mainly because computer technology changes very rapidly, and today's 100% score can easily fall quite dramatically if it is not maintained at this level on an ongoing basis.

   As a lead in a small academic technology group that covers a wide range of responsibilities related to instructional technology in a college program, I consider this to be one of core competencies in my daily work. If there is an area in which I'd like to improve, it would be my knowledge of the most recent version of Windows, which I use less frequently in my daily work than MacOS.

3. How do you plan to improve your Computer Competency (refer to the resources included in your Assessment Report if necessary)?

   My campus-supported access to www.lynda.com library of video courses/tutorials is the best resource for this type of knowledge. Learning software is a hands-on, visually-driven task for me. Video-based instruction, especially when accompanied by sample files that can be used to work along with the video tutorials, is a much more efficient / faster medium for this type of learning than text-based instruction. I also like using YouTube for a quick search if I need a short instructional video on a very specific topic.

Internet Competency

1. What was your Internet Competency score?
   My Internet Competency score was **100%** (with a QM national average at 73%).

2. What priority do you place on improving your Internet Competency (High, Medium, or Low) and why?
   I place **medium** priority on improving my Internet Competency. Although I feel very comfortable with my Internet Competency level on the desktop, in a world where mobile computing is increasingly more pervasive, I feel that my skills in this area need to be at a comparable level. Although my Internet Competency on iOS (iPhone and iPad Pro running iOS 10) is high (both are daily-use mobile devices), I do not use Android devices often, and feel less proficient.

3. How do you plan to improve your Internet Competency (refer to the resources included in your Assessment Report if necessary)?

> I plan to improve my Internet Competency by **deliberately** using an Android device during designated times of the day instead of my usual primary (iOS) devices (even though the latter is faster because I am more accustomed to it).

> I feel that in this case, the best way for me to learn in a way that "sticks," is by using the device on a regular basis. The support section of the Google Fi Project (https://support.google.com/fi#topic=4596407) offers many useful how-to resources that help learn how to use my Android device more effectively.

Technology Usage

1. What was your Technology Usage score?
   > My Technology Usage score was **95%**, although the feedback did not make it clear what specific area might benefit from improvement.

2. What priority do you place on improving your Technology Usage (High, Medium, or Low) and why?
   > I place **medium to low** priority on improving my Technology Usage competency, because I feel that I am quite knowledgeable and competent with the technologies I need to use for both work and everyday tasks.

3. How do you plan to improve your Technology Usage (refer to the resources included in your Assessment Report if necessary)?

> When I need to solve a technology-related problem in an area in which I do not have sufficient expertise, I would conduct a google search for a specific topic, and check out the top-rated resources. For more extensive, in-depth coverage of any technology topic (for example, ebook publishing, which I explored more in-depth recently), my usual first go-to place is a good technical manual. My favorite publisher of technology-related how-to book titles is O'Reilly (http://www.oreilly.com/), because their e-book titles are all published in multiple formats (PDF, standard e-pub, and mobi), and without DRM, so I can use the best version for each device/screen (I like reading print-like PDFs on a big screen, but prefer e-pub for reading on my phone during commute).
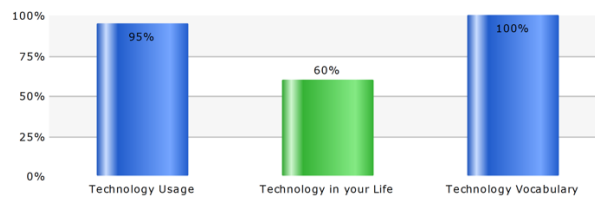
Technology In Your Life

1. What was your Technology in your Life score?
   My Technology in your Life score was **60% / 90%***

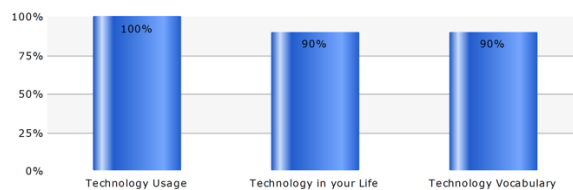   ***Clarification:** I took this assessment twice, with very different scores:

   Attempt 1:

   Detailed Results

   Attempt 2:

   Detailed Results

   This part of the assessment asks directly which devices I **own**, and asks me to choose from a pre-set list. The list includes numerous devices which in the past were available as separate objects, but by now, their functionality has been folded into a smart phone: I do not own a video camera, a GPS, an MP3 player, a voice recorder, a scanner, or a CD/DVD player because their functionality (for everyday, casual use, or even work-related use) has been superseded by a smart phone. As a device, it offers features that exceed those of older single-purpose devices: for example, I can not only record regular SD or HD video, but also 4K video, time-lapse video, and slow-motion video; I can not only record a 4K video, but also edit it on my phone; I can not only take photos, but also crop them, apply filters and exposure adjustments to them, and then upload them to a website, or email them to a friend, and so on. I cannot play a DVD or a CD on my phone, but these technologies have been largely replaced by streaming media in my life.

   The second attempt (and my second score of 90%) reflected **my answers when I assumed** that I should answer **yes** if my phone had a feature that corresponded to the original single-purpose device, **and** if I was proficient using my phone for that purpose.

2. What priority do you place on improving your Technology in your Life (High, Medium, or Low) and why?

> I place a **high** priority on **maintaining** a high level of useful technology in my life, because I find that it can save a lot of time in my work, and offers a lot of practical functionality with just one or two carefully chosen devices.

3. How do you plan to improve your Technology in your Life (refer to the resources included in your Assessment Report if necessary)?

> I like to identify the areas in my work and personal life where technology could be helpful or beneficial, and once I have a specific need in mind, I proceed to find the best technology tool that will be useful. I use Google search to identify potential apps, or search the app store and read reviews before trying an app. Then, I'll use YouTube to search for a quick overview of the app I'm considering.

> For example, I like using traditional, large dry-erase whiteboards during team meetings, so I found and learned to use an app (https://readdle.com/products/scannerpro) that lets me quickly take photos of whiteboards filled with sketches and notes at the end of the meeting, converts them all into one, date-stamped PDF, and uploads it to a folder in my dropbox.com account. By the time I'm back in my office, the whiteboards are available on my desktop computer. Usually the app developer website includes the basic information that is needed to get started.

Technology Vocabulary

1. What was your Technology Vocabulary score?
   My technology vocabulary score was 100%.

   a. What priority do you place on improving your Technology Vocabulary (High, Medium, or Low) and why?

   > I place **low** priority on learning technology-related vocabulary, because this is something that I learn best (and simultaneously) as I develop other, more practical technology-related skills. In today's landscape of easily available information, memorizing what terms like URL, ISP, USB, of FTP mean is hardly necessary – if needed, this type of information can be checked online in a matter of seconds, and is often not helpful in performing most tasks that rely on using technology.

2. How do you plan to improve your Technology Vocabulary (refer to the resources included in your Assessment Report if necessary)?

   > I do not plan to **focus** on improving my technology-related vocabulary. However, when I learn how to use new technologies, I will select high-quality information sources (such as www.lynda.com video tutorials or technical manuals from O'Reilly http://www.oreilly.com/) to make sure that what I learn about new software or hardware is presented using correct, relevant terminology.

Personal Computer/Internet Specification

1. What were your Personal Computer/Internet Specification scores? Identify all four scores below:
   a. Do you own a computer? Yes
   b. Estimate how many years old the computer is which you will use to participate in your courses: 1-2
   c. How do you connect to the Internet? Cable\DSL\Fiber Optic.
   d. What type of operating system do you have on the computer?
      Macintosh (OS X El Capitan).

2. What priority do you place on improving your Personal Computer/Internet Specification (High, Medium, or Low) and why?

   > **Low** at this point, because I presently have access to new, fast hardware; but overall I think using fast, up-to-date hardware, when possible / feasible is a high priority because it often directly affects work (in terms of both speed, and quality of results).

3. How do you plan to improve your Personal Computer/Internet Specification (refer to the resources included in your Assessment Report if necessary)?

   > I do not have such need at this moment, but in the future, I'd consider what type of work I need to do, and make sure that the hardware I use for work is adequate for the task. For example, processor speed is not critical for word-processing, or running one or two Microsoft Office-type applications, or web browsing. But it becomes important when the machine is routinely used for tasks such as editing and encoding video, or analyzing large data sets.
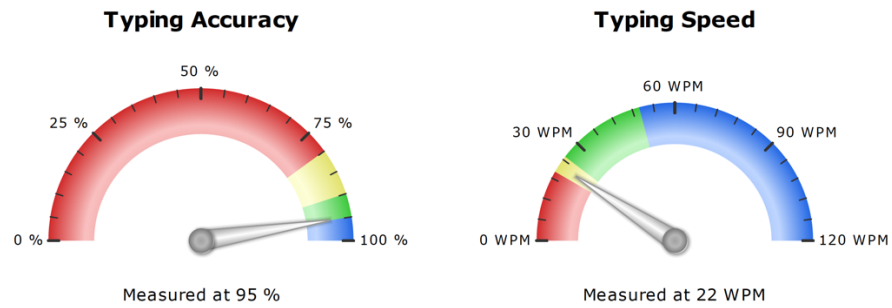
   > I would use the websites of equipment vendors, and reputable online review sites (for example https://www.cnet.com/ for hardware or www.macstories.net for MacOS and iOS apps) to better inform my choices before committing to any specific technology solution.
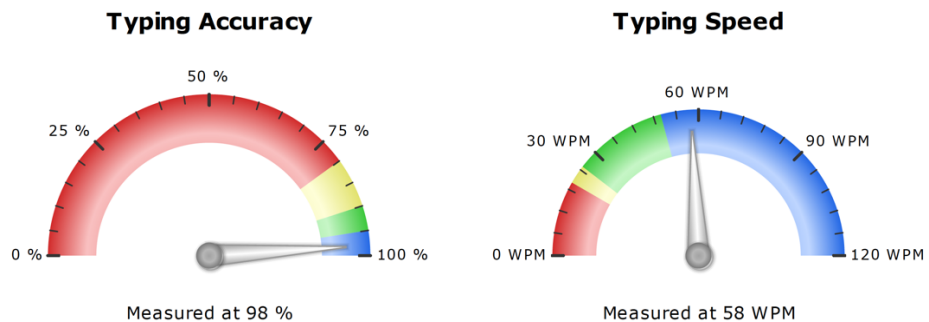
Typing Speed & Accuracy

1. What were your Typing Speed & Accuracy scores? Identify both scores below:
   a. Net Score (WPM): 22 (upper 30-s) / 58*
   b. Accuracy (%): 95 / 98*

   > **Clarification of scores:** I took the TS&A test twice. The first attempt reflects the initial approach, with a low score, further depressed by my failure to press the "Stop Timer" button right away (my regular typing speed in in the upper 30-s). The second, much higher "speed and accuracy" scores reflect my 2nd attempt, this time using **dictation**, rather than **typing**.

   > First attempt (typing slowly, and trying to find the "stop timer" button):

Typing Accuracy

Measured at 95 %

Typing Speed

Measured at 22 WPM

Second attempt (just "talking it through"):

Typing Accuracy

Measured at 98 %

Typing Speed

Measured at 58 WPM

2. What priority do you place on improving your Typing Speed & Accuracy (High, Medium, or Low) and why?

> I place **low priority** on improving my Typing Speed & Accuracy score. Touch-typing **was** a very useful skill a decade ago, and before then, and I wish I had taken the time to become a better / faster typist when I was in grad school (but, alas, I didn't).
>
> However, typing, like playing a musical instrument, dicing carrots, or skiing, is a motor skill, and as such cannot be learned by mere comprehension or knowledge (for example, by reading a good book about it). It requires time. Investing a valuable resource (time) is fully justified when it promises a good return on investment. However, by now (2016) typing has lost much of its value, largely because of two factors: 1) diversification of devices beyond the standard-size QUERTY keyboard, and 2) advances in dictation / voice recognition technology.
>
> **The first trend** means that in my daily activities, I use text-entry devices that vary in sizes and in typing technique that works best (standard keyboard, vs. reduced-size, shallow key-travel iPad keyboard, vs. phone's virtual thumb-size keyboard). Leaning to type faster on a standard keyboard would not be helpful in using a 2-inch software keyboard on a smart phone.
>
> **More importantly, the second trend** (improvements in voice-recognition technology) means I can (and often do) dictate any – even quite technical - text, averaging 55-65 WPM, and over 98%+ accuracy. Although dictation is not always feasible and practical

(for example, in a noisy internet café, airport, or on a bus to work) in most environments where I work it works well. It is available on all text-entry devices I use (MacOS, iOS, and Android).

Even if I invested substantial time and effort in improving my typing skills at this point, reaching comparable speed and accuracy is unlikely. Therefore, I'll settle for a technology-facilitated solution that works well instead. In fact, 90% of this document was dictated, and not typed.

3. How do you plan to improve your Typing Speed & Accuracy (refer to the resources included in your Assessment Report if necessary)?

I plan to explore and keep up-to-date with technology-based solutions that let me increase the accuracy and speed of text entry through dictation. I take the time to identify in my OS user manual or in online articles found through google search, the tips and techniques that can help me make the most of the hardware and software I use.