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Paper and Pixels: Mobile Learning Practices at Smith College

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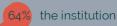
ETS Tech Tips: How to Vet an App

SMITH COLLEGE

key questions & considerations

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN & PEDAGOGY

- Use of technology supports learning objectives.
- Use of technology provides opportunities to increase / enhance understanding.
- Does the app have multiple ability levels, provide feedback or offer summary data?
- Is the content factual, reliable, and free of spelling and grammatical errors?
- Students may: create; evaluate; analyze; apply; understand; or remember.
- Use of technology enables: student-faculty contact; collaboration among students; active learning; gives prompt feedback; emphasizes time on task; communicates high expectations; respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

Debate it: technology is a tool, not a learning outcome.

Technology makes students feel more connected to

64% the institution

60% the professors

53% other students

USABILITY Usability evaluation focuses on how well users can learn and use a product to achieve their goals.

- User interface is aesthetically pleasing and easy to navigate, and has a clean, minimalistic design.
- The application loads quickly and does not crash.
- The system language follows both real-world and platform conventions.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS & COMPATIBILITY

- With what platforms is the app compatible? Operating systems and devices.
- Does the app require a connection to WiFi? What, if any, functionality is lost when WiFi is unavailable?
- What types of content / data can users produce via the app?
- Can users archive, export or move content? How is data backed up?
- Across what applications is data interoperable? (ie. Moodle and Panopto Recorder)
- Are support resources available? Are they well-organized with step-by-step instructions?
- Is the app advertising free? If no, are the ads appropriate for an academic audience?
- Are users required to cite app if publishing papers based on results derived from app?

58% of students own **three** or more Internet-capable devices.

TERMS OF SERVICE

- Are the terms of service and privacy policies easy to find and understandable?
- Who owns the user-generated content? Can content be licensed to third parties? Is data mined?

If an account is required ...
- Can users control their privacy? Do users have a right to leave service?
- How does app handle government requests? Is there a promise to inform users about requests?

Learn more about this topic at http://tosdr.org

If all American Internet users were to annually read the online privacy policies word-for-word each time they visited a new site, the nation would spend about 54 billion hours reading privacy policies.

MIND THE "DIGITAL DIVIDE"

- Do not assume that every student has access to mobile technology (laptop, tablet, smartphone, etc). If use of a device and app are required for class participation, contact the Center for Media Production to discuss / arrange loaner devices and/or configure technology tool to accept multiple responses from a single device (allowing students to pair and share).
- Cost should always be considered, and whenever possible, lessened to ensure equal access.
- Does app meet levels of accessibility compliance to be considerate of users with disabilities?

Sources: Emerging Technology Evaluation Tool, 2013 (Smith College, Educational Technology Services, Teaching & Research Group)
The Annual ECAR Student and IT Study, 2013, (EDUCAUSE)
The Cost of Reading Privacy Policies, 2008 (I/S The Journal of Law and Policy for the Information Society)

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