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### **Contents**

- 1) Presentation text and slides.
- 2) Conference program details.

**Abstract.** In this presentation we describe the development of our project, which explores the application of table computers to the daily work of library staff across a variety of library departments; how the project was administered and evolved; and some of the preliminary results. Slides for the presentation are embedded in the narrative.

SLIDES 1 & 2

*New Services Drive New Workflows: Infoblitz*

## Tablets for Library Staff: Tools, Toys, or Troubles?

Jon Giullian [gjullian@ku.edu](mailto:gjullian@ku.edu)  
Frances Devlin [fdevlin@ku.edu](mailto:fdevlin@ku.edu)  
Betsaida Reyes [breyes@ku.edu](mailto:breyes@ku.edu)  
Internet Librarian Conference 2015

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

## Outline

- Background
- Tools, Toys, or Troubles
- Lessons Learned
- Feedback

I will start by giving you some background about the project, show how we used the tablets as tools for work, as toys to play with, and describe some of the troubles we encountered. I will end with some of the lessons learned and with some final words from the participants.

SLIDES 3 & 4

## Background



PEW  
2014  
2015

Today's university and college students have grown up in a world of rapidly changing technologies. It has influenced the way they think, seek out, and process information. On a daily basis, they use computers, smart phones, or tablets – looking for information, playing games, texting, and they are on social media like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram connecting with their friends and family. A 2014 Pew report found that 50% of American adults now own a tablet or e-reader. Another one from 2015 found that 87% of American teenagers (ages 13-17) have access to a computer and 58% either own or have access to a tablet. We know that tablets are also being introduced as learning tools into elementary schools at an early age, which means that in the coming years, a growing number of students entering university or college may be using tablets as their main choice of technology. How do we, as librarians, prepare ourselves to become more skilled, more comfortable with using these devices as well? This was the rationale for our research project – to challenge ourselves to see if we could find ways to incorporate tablets into our daily workflows and especially be prepared to help our students.

SLIDE 5

With this in mind, we formed a Collaborative Learning Community of 12-14 library staff from several units to participate in this yearlong project. The purpose was to create a supportive environment in which we could learn from each other and share ideas. It was a diverse group of

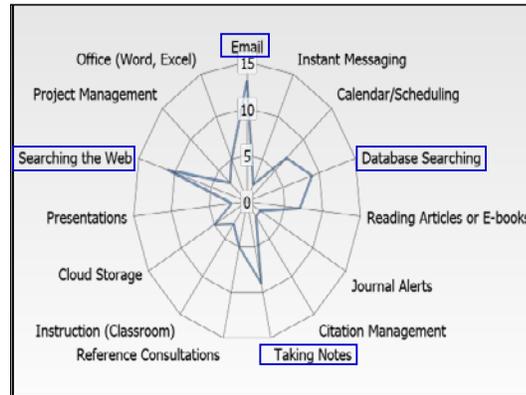


librarians and professional staff from units like Reference, Instruction, Content Development, Cataloging, International Area Studies, Special Collections, and Interlibrary Loan. We purchased 8 iPads, 3 Samsung Galaxies, 1 Dell Venue, and 1 Google Nexus to compare how well each worked. In return for having a tablet, we asked for a commitment from everyone to try to use the tablets as much as possible, to experiment with them, and document their experiences in a weekly journal. We

held regular meetings throughout the year, about every 4-6 weeks, so we could share information about how we were using the tablets, show each other some of apps we were finding, how they were useful, and to trouble-shoot any technical issues we were having. We encouraged the group to push themselves to find ways to incorporate the tablets into their workflows. Some needed more encouragement than others did. It depended on the nature of their work and sometimes, their personalities. About half way through the year, we gave them a “challenge day” where tried to use the tablet all day (and not revert to their computer or laptop). That was tough for some. We also encouraged them to experiment, to “play” with the tablets, to take them home, use them outside of work, to increase their comfort levels. At the end of the year, we gathered additional information and feedback through a survey with 34 questions. Today, I will report only on responses to three of the questions that we asked: how did the group use the tablets as “tools” in their work, as “toys”, and what were some of the “troubles” they encountered.

SLIDES 6 & 7

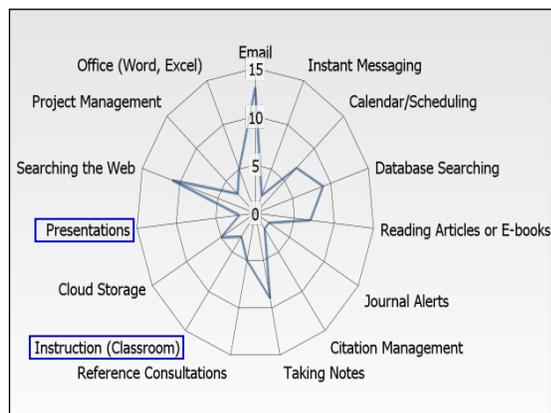
**Tools**  
**How did you incorporate the tablet into your work?**



When you look at this chart [Slide 7], you can see that the most common or typical work uses for tablets were checking email, searching the Web, taking notes in meetings, and database searching

SLIDE 8

Other types of use required more time and preparation or involved more risk-taking: A) some reported using the tablet to give a presentation – they could move around the room and were not tied to a podium. B) One person used the tablet for instruction with a small class of



graduate students sitting around a conference table (seminar style). He was able to move around easily to work with the students. C) Another used Poplet, a mind-mapping app, for brainstorming keywords with students. D) A librarian from the Art Library bought an e-book that was a required text “Interaction of Color” by Josef Albers. She worked with students to show them how to use the features. It much more interactive than using the print book playing with the different color

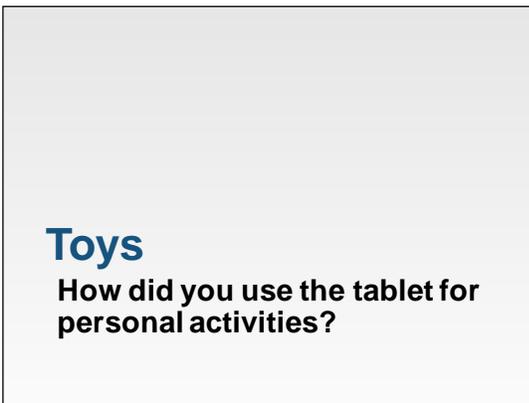
combinations. However, some people found it very difficult to find applications in their workflow to use tablets. Tablets have come a long way, but are still not robust enough to handle things like: A) Specialized software or programs (for example, Inter-library loan or database management). B) Data analysis (like in collections work, monitoring budgets, ordering materials, evaluating database/journal usage).

SLIDE 9



We asked everyone which apps they used the most for work. These are some of the favorites: Google apps were very popular. Browsers and cloud storage, Dropbox and Google drive. Asana & Trello were used for project management and communicating with teams. Apps for note-taking and making lists (like Evernote). PaperShip was one I discovered for citation management (you could import your references from Zotero or EndNote).

SLIDE 10



We also encouraged everyone to use the tablets outside work – for playing games or other personal uses, to try some new apps and develop their skills.

SLIDE 11



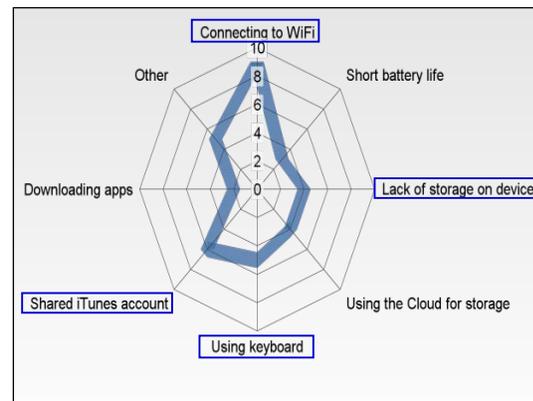
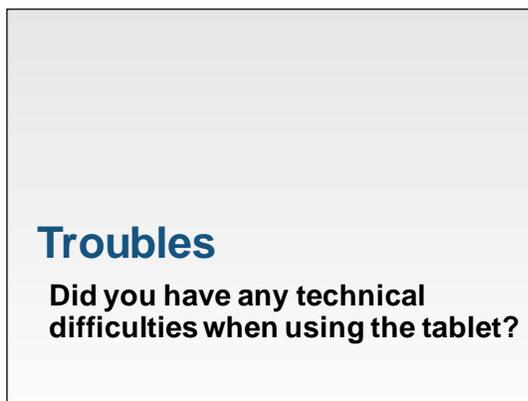
Looking at this chart, you can see that people tended to use their tablets for surfing the Web, watching videos, social media, and checking news & weather.

SLIDE 12



On this slide, you can see what everyone’s favorite apps for personal use were (Facebook, Google, Skype, Music, News, Games, etc.)

SLIDES 13 & 14



You can see that a common problem with the tablets was “connecting to Wi-Fi”. (We did not have data plans, so using wireless connections was the only option). Another problem we encountered with the iPads was sharing a common iTunes account to download apps and to share Cloud storage. Using keyboards with the tablets were problematic – some did not work, others were difficult to get used to because they were small, and characters were positioned differently than a regular keyboard.

SLIDES 15 & 16

**Lessons Learned**  
What did we learn and what would we do differently?

**Technical**

- Sharing a common account (for iTunes)
- More training
- Ability to choose tablet
- Keyboards

**Privacy concerns.** There were technical issues related to sharing a common account: A) apps would appear on everyone’s device, so we soon learned how to turn off the “sharing” in the settings; B) cloud storage—we started getting messages that we were running out of storage space and the tablets couldn’t be backed up. **More training** on using the tablets was needed. Although we started with some basic training, we could have used some additional and more targeted training. Most of us had not owned or used a tablet before. While we picked up some tips from each other, this was not consistent for everyone. **Ability to choose device.** We allowed participants to select their preferred brand, but in retrospect, we should have ordered an equal number of the brands we wanted to test (we ended up with more iPads). **Keyboards.** There were pros & cons to the keyboards. Some people really disliked them and did not use them; others benefitted from having them, depending on how they were using their devices. They did make the tablets heavier to carry around, which detracted from their portability.

SLIDE 17

**Confidence building.** Most participants had little prior experience using tablets, so their confidence levels improved greatly; some found ways to use them in their work, which opened up new opportunities. **Improved Skills.** Everyone’s technical skills and familiarity levels using

**Social**

- Confidence building
- Improved skills
- Communication
- Awareness
- Diversity

tablets improved. **Communication, Awareness, & Diversity** (all related). In creating a Collaborative Learning Community, we brought people from all across the library together to participate, thereby increasing communication and awareness of each other’s work. It was a diverse group of library staff, from several different units, with different work needs, and we learned a lot from each other throughout the project.

