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Decline and Fall of the Print Calendar at the University of Saskatchewan

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Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

- Edward Gibbon, published between 1776-1789




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Background




U of S had a print Calendar since the beginning, like every other university or college.

SESD designed an excellent online Calendar to complement print version which was posted at the same time the print was released. But it was updated later in summer to reflect new/changed courses/programs, which rendered the print Calendar obsolete.


Online calendar drew on home-grown student information system.

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Background




May 2005 Banner implementation essentially broke the in-house designed online Calendar because it drew information only from the legacy student information system.


A temporary solution for online Calendar, drawing from Banner, was not user friendly and drew user criticism.

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Policy Environment




University Council approved the online Calendar as the official Calendar in 2000 as "the basis for the legal relationships between students and the University of Saskatchewan with respect to programs and courses offered by the University."

At the same meeting, Council approved a motion which stated that the University should continue to produce print copies of the Calendar but that steps should be taken to encourage use of the online version with a view to the eventual minimization or elimination of the print Calendar.

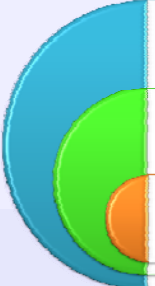
Little movement or discussion thereafter about this goal, though print runs declined substantially over 2000-2006 period.

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Policy Environment




Work of ARUCC Subcommittee investigating purpose/user needs, legal/policy, and technology issues as they pertained to Calendars.

ARUCC Suggested Best Practices and Guidelines for Institutional Calendars, Biennial Meeting, 2006.


Best practice #1: "Move solely to the production of an e-calendar."

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Challenge Faced in 2006-7




SESD did not have human and financial resources both to produce the print Calendar and fix the broken online Calendar.

AVP, SESD approached Provost to determine whether transition funding that would allow for both would be considered.


Provost advised that such a request would not be received positively and advised SESD to "disinvest and reinvest."

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Consultation and Decision




Discussion paper proposing eliminating the print calendar as of the 2007-8 academic year, shifting human and financial resources toward improving the online Calendar, circulated.

SESD consulted key groups: Academic Associate Deans, College Academic Advisors, Guidance Counsellors, and SESD units.


It was generally recognized (we thought) that transition would be difficult for some but it was the right thing to do under the circumstances.

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Consultation and Decision




Decision was taken by SESD eliminating print Calendar as of 2007-8 in May 2007.

Campus community was notified (Deans, Department Heads, Heads of Administrative Units), by memo from Registrar in July 2007.

Coincided with ITS decision to purchase a web content management system (WCMS) for the University, for which the Calendar would be a pilot.

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Aftermath

Everything was fine and everyone lived happily ever after!

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Transition Problems

Like every IT project, it took more resources than we thought and therefore longer than we thought (almost two years for a fully functioning online Calendar). This caused frustration among users.


We are still working on adding additional features that users want some four years later.

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Transition Problems




Criticism began to mount the next spring when the absence of a print Calendar actually impacted users on campus.

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Transition Problems



We quickly realized that the message about the why we had eliminated the print Calendar had not trickled down from the levels we had consulted at.


Flurry of critical emails and memos from faculty, advisors, alumni (though little from students).

Motion was put before University Council demanding a print Calendar and that the General Academic Assembly be consulted on the decision.


Some who had been consulted as part of the initial decision-making distanced themselves from the decision publicly and in correspondence.

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Transition Problems



Certain colleges raised concerns over accreditation and the need for a print Calendar.

General feeling that elimination of the print Calendar did not mean for the campus community, and that SESD was not living up to a commitment.

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Transition Problems

on campus NEWS

Print versus online – the calendar debate

February 8, 2008

By Colleen MacPherson

In response to the particular needs of academic advisors on the campus, plans are being made to print a restricted version of the university calendar online at the same time, with continues to improve the usability of the online version of the document.

Kelly McInnes, registrar and acting director of enrolment with Student and Enrolment Services Division (SESD), said recent concerns voiced about the lack of a printed calendar and difficulties using the online site came as no surprise. While the online calendar is considered the University's "official" version, "it has always been a mirror of the print version, and that's not good web use," she said. "It's no wonder it's not easy to use currently. We've had lots of complaints, and we agree."

The calendar was a topic of discussion at the December meeting of University Council when the Registry Department reported on how various it passed unanimously at a department meeting "Dec. 15. They called on Council to review and report on how the decision was made to cease publication of the calendar, and advise for consultation with the General Academic Assembly about its wishes regarding a print calendar."


McInnes said the decision to stop printing the calendar was made about a year ago after extensive study of the role the calendar plays on and off campus. A proposal that included discontinuing the printed calendar, starting the mandate of the document and transferring the money spent on printing to improving the online calendar was made to the academic advisory board of the student representation (SA) project. That group of advisors and associate deans has since advised that a committee focused more broadly on undergraduate issues and experience.



McInnes

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Response

Advising Guides, <http://www.usask.ca/sesd/colleges/advisors>. SESD had agreed to produce PDFs of course and program information as part of the original decision. This was better communicated and the Advising Guides posted.


There was some expectation SESD would pay for the printing costs – we did not.

Set up working group with college advisors to meet regularly to determine content of Advising Guides and features of online Calendar.



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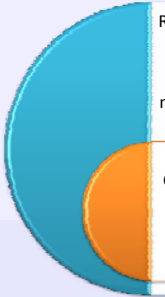
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Response


Responded to University Council with a formal report indicating the decision-making process that led to the elimination of the print Calendar. We pointed out that it was in keeping with original Council motion of 2000. Council declined to take any further action on the matter.

Contacted accreditation agencies and discovered no need for a print Calendar per se, and worked with colleges to meet their accreditation needs in the online Calendar.




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And it continues....



Every year we continue to get complaints about the lack of a print Calendar from some quarter.

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Lessons Learned




Life Lessons

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Lessons Learned #1




Consult widely and with all stakeholders, particularly students. Informed is not consulted. And have a good communication plan.

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Lessons Learned #2a




Academics want to be consulted on academic matters.

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Lessons Learned #2b



Everything is an academic matter.

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Lessons Learned #3



Cite the best practices and the trend.

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Lessons Learned #4




Make a sustainability argument.

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Lessons Learned #5



Have your online solution in place before phasing out the print calendar.

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Lessons Learned #6




Have an archiving plan in place.

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Lessons Learned #7




Decide how rigid or flexible your updating is going to be.

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Lessons Learned #8




Define what you consider a Calendar, and codify it in policy.


“Formerly known as the University Calendar, the University Catalogue is an online document that at a minimum consists of the Course & Program Catalogue and the Academic Calendar as well as information pertaining to Tuition & Fees and Registration and Admissions policies.”

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Lessons Learned #9



Define the authority for the Calendar in policy – and make that authority the Registrar.

“The nature, extent and format of information contained in the University Catalogue are determined by the Registrar in accordance with national and international professional standards, normal practice in higher education, and practical systems.”

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Lessons Learned #10



And stop calling it a
Calendar!

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Lessons Learned #11



Develop a thick
skin – you're
going to need it!

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Lessons Learned #12



And lastly....

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Thank you!

Questions,
Comments,
Discussion?
