BLACKBOARD ALLY SANDBOX INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

Institutional Report

Abstract

The following document outlines the results of Blackboard Ally testing as part of a 9-month sandbox pilot project facilitated by BCcampus. The project ran from April-December 2018 and involved 5 BC post-secondary institution; UBC, VCC, Langara

BLACKBOARD ALLY SANDBOX

INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

INSTITUTIONAL DETAILS

Institution: Vancouver Community College

Report Author: Shirley Lew, Brett Griffiths

Your Role: Dean Library and Teaching and Learning Services, Dean School of Trades, Technology and Design

Date Submitted: March 1, 2019

Your Institutional Learning Management System: Moodle

The Learning Management System you tested Ally on (if different than your institutional LMS):

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Did you experience any significant or unexpected technical issues during installation of the application? If so, please describe the issue and how the issue was resolved.

The installation was smooth and without issues, no significant or unexpected technical issues presented during the installation of the application.

Did you experience any significant technical issues with Ally operation during the sandbox/pilot period? If so, please describe the issue and how the issue was resolved.

No significant technical issues were observed with Ally operation during the sandbox period.

USER TESTING

Ally comes with 3 sets of components aimed at different use cases within an institution; Student Tools, Instructor Tools, and Institutional Reporting Tools. For each of the components you tested, briefly outline;

- Describe who tested the tool?
- Did the tool work as they expected?
- If not, what was unexpected?
- Did the test users find the tools easy and intuitive to use? If not, what parts of the application did your users find was not intuitive to use?
- What did the users like about the tools?
- What did the users dislike about the tools?
- What kind of support did you provide, or was required, to support the tester during the testing session.
- Any general comments you may have about this specific component?

STUDENT TOOLS

Describe who tested the tool?

Deans, Moodle support staff, automotive instructors, and faculty and staff in the Disability Services department. We did not recruit students to test though we know they made use of the tool.

Did the tool work as they expected?

Yes

If not, what was unexpected?

Did the test users find the tools easy and intuitive to use? If not, what parts of the application did your users find was not intuitive to use?

Yes

What did the users like about the tools?

The Ally tool provided easy access to alternative formats, had a simple intuitive interface, and provided easy to access translated documents. The translated documents are of great benefit to English as Additional Language learners.

What did the users dislike about the tools?

Lack of video captioning, difficult to use institutional reporting tool

What kind of support did you provide, or was required, to support the tester during the testing session.

No formal support was provided to the testers and none to students. Testers were given training by Blackboard and then the application was enabled in the Moodle LMS. A few questions were received afterwards, but generally the application required almost no support.

Any general comments you may have about this specific component?

INSTRUCTOR TOOLS

Describe who tested the tool?

Deans, Moodle support staff, automotive instructors, and faculty and staff in the Disability Services department.

Did the tool work as they expected?

Yes

If not, what was unexpected?

Did the test users find the tools easy and intuitive to use? If not, what parts of the application did your users find was not intuitive to use?

Yes

What did the users like about the tools?

78% of survey respondents found file accessibility score with instructor feedback and guidance easy to understand and use. Testers also liked the explanation of accessibility problems with files.

What did the users dislike about the tools?

Only half of survey respondents were able to use Ally guidance to improve accessibility of files. Users also disliked the lack of video captioning. Additionally, it would be useful if the Ally plugin could also include feedback to improve accessibility of Moodle pages and activities would also be very beneficial (i.e. quizzes, lessons, pages).

What kind of support did you provide, or was required, to support the tester during the testing session.

Almost no support was required.

Any general comments you may have about this specific component?

INSTITUTIONAL REPORTING TOOLS

Describe who tested the tool?

Deans

Did the tool work as they expected?

Yes, but the interface was not intuitive and reporting was not useful for planning purposes.

If not, what was unexpected?

Did the test users find the tools easy and intuitive to use? If not, what parts of the application did your users find was not intuitive to use?

The courses tab made little sense, it would have been nice to be able to sort by number of users, number of documents and overall score to determine where to allocate resources for improvement.

What did the users like about the tools?

Useful to have an overview of overall accessibility.

What did the users dislike about the tools?

See comment above.

What kind of support did you provide, or was required, to support the tester during the testing session.

None required.

Any general comments you may have about this specific component?

Ally Support

After testing Ally, what kind of supports and/or training do you feel would be required to support students and instructors with using Ally?

Instructors and students could benefit from an overview video that quickly outlines the function of Ally and how to use. While Ally was very easy to use and had what appeared to be a high uptake rate during the pilot considering there was no formal announcement, those that did not use it or notice that it was enabled would likely need an introduction to the function and operation.

During the testing, did you visit the Ally community forums? Did you find the community forums were a useful resource for you?

Users did not visit the Ally community forums during the testing phase.

Outside of the Ally forums, did you look for other sources of information for Ally functionality and/or support? If so, what did you find?

Direct support and questions were answered directly through our connections at Blackboard, our support team was incredibly helpful and provided timely responses to all queries and concerns.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Are there any features that you or your testers felt were missing from Ally?

Video captioning is a critical feature for VCC, we have a substantial population of Deaf and Hard of Hearing students and we know that captioning is very useful for EAL learners. Additionally, captioning will help us to reach our strategic initiative of using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) practices for course development. It would be helpful if the Ally plugin could include Moodle pages and activities would also be very beneficial (i.e. quizzes, lessons, pages). A stand-alone Ally tool (i.e. outside the Moodle environment) would be really beneficial to make all college materials and web contact accessible.

How would you compare Ally to the other types of accessibility tools you may be familiar with?

Excellent, the Ally tool provides a very simple and intuitive way to provide accessible formats of documents.

What do you see as the top benefit for an institution to adopt Ally?

Students are able to quickly and easily download accessible formats of documents, without the need to declare a disability. This tool benefits all learners and users who have different preferences for ingesting information.

What do you think is the biggest challenge for an institution looking to adopt Ally?

Budget restraints and annual cost. Culture change and learning curve for faculty and content creators.

What advice do you have for others who might be considering piloting this application?

Have a longer trial period as well as a explicit pilot plan.