

# Going Paperless: Gauging User Behavior and Opinion in the Transition to Online University Catalogs

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Pang Kou Khang ❖ Faculty Mentors Dr. Martha Fay & Barbara Arnold ❖ Communication and Journalism



## Rationale

In an effort to transition from paper to web-based catalogs, a Midwest university examined user behavior and preferences with regard to the university's current and potential future catalog formats. This study explored how people use catalogs, what challenges they encounter, and what ways the change can be structured to be most beneficial, based on Giddens' (1984) structuration theory. Previous research on the introduction of new systems suggests that experience and familiarity with technology affect the success of the initiative (Poole & DeSanctis, 1992), as do general attitudes about change (Senge, 1999). In addition, the climate of the organization and leadership style impact acceptance of change (Riley, 1983). Results will be used to make recommendations for the catalog and for communicating with various constituents about the change, and will help aid in further understanding the relationship between attitudes toward change, leadership style, work environment, and change implementation.

## Methods

### Participants:

- Total of 794 participants: 543 students, 75 administrative staff members, 93 faculty members
- 74% females, 26% males
- Participants were primarily Caucasian (95%)
- 51% of participants were primarily affiliated with the College of Arts and Sciences

### Procedures:

- Conducted focus groups to gather general information and input on the university catalog
- Created an electronic survey through Qualtrics, an online tool
- Questionnaire consisted of 74 questions and 3 scales:
  1. Job Descriptive Index
  2. Communication Environment (KEYS) Scale
  3. Resistance to Change Scale

### Job Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall, Hulin, 1969) (8 items)

Reliability:  $\alpha=.86$  ( $M=19.66$ ,  $SD=5.73$ )

*Good, Desirable, Better than most, Disagreeable, Makes me content, Excellent, Enjoyable, Poor*

### Communication Environment (KEYS) Scale (Amabile, 1995) (6 items)

Reliability:  $\alpha=.84$  ( $M=15.56$ ,  $SD=4.84$ )

Everyone in this department/unit is encouraged to participate and voice their ideas and opinions.  
*Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree or disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree*

### Resistance to Change Scale (Oreg, 2003) (21 items)

Reliability:  $\alpha=.85$  ( $M=65.91$ ,  $SD=9.37$ )

I'll take a routine day over a day full of unexpected events anytime.

*Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree or disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree*

## Research Questions & Results

### RQ<sub>1</sub>: What is the preferred medium for the university catalog?

- Among students: On-line web-based version (195 students, 36%)
- Among administrators: Print version (41 administrative members, 54%)
- Among faculty: Print version (57 faculty members, 61%)

### RQ<sub>2</sub>: What feature do you find most useful in the university catalog?

- Among students: Include a degree overview sheet for each major (424 students, 78%)
- Among administrators: Ability to locate specific information quickly (57 administrative members, 76%)
- Among faculty: Ability to locate specific information quickly (86 faculty members, 93%)

### RQ<sub>3</sub>: Is resistance to change related to catalog preference?

- No significant correlation

### RQ<sub>4</sub>: Is job satisfaction related to communication environment?

- Pearson's correlation shows a positive significant relationship ( $p<.001$ ,  $r=.43$ )
- Job satisfaction decreases when working under autocratic leadership (top-down governance)

## Ideas to Improve the University Catalog

- "Make the catalog searchable or linkable for easier and faster navigation."
- "It is already very useful, but the organization could be better. Tabs, divisions, and spiral binding would make it more functional."
- "It would be more useful if the requirements were written more clearly - as in the degree audit."
- "Use more than just one version; however, keep it consistent if using different versions."

**Acknowledgements:** UWEC Differential Tuition, UW-Eau Claire Center of Excellence for Faculty and Undergraduate Student Research Collaboration, Dr. Martha Fay, Barbara Arnold, Learning and Technology Services (LTS), and Building Information Technology Skills (BITS)