

IT Interested? Encouraging IT Experimentation in the Library
Thursday, April 28th 10:45am-Noon
WAAL Conference 2011

IT Interest Group Overview

The campus libraries benefit from a discussion forum that emphasizes creative thinking and knowledge/skill sharing. We want to encourage creativity to "become a learning organization."

1) The IT interest group is focused on technology. It is important to not let the "as advertised" topics/discussions get too broad. Focusing on the library technology angle keeps the discussions manageably focused. There is currently no other regular forum at UW Madison other than the IT Interest group (for the non-IT-specific-librarians) to discuss new technology issues. Though we want as few rules for the group as possible, **the first rule is that we stick to discussing "technology" issues.**

2) When the IT Interest Group was formed the problem that we were trying to address was complicated. A feeling of ambivalence toward new technology exists, though people may hide it. In a group of very techie people, the not-so-techies may not want to speak up or get involved. The second important aspect of the group is that nobody is judgmental or hostile to any body's ideas. There is no expectation that people present finished projects, have fully-formed proposals, or that people even understand the technology they want to discuss. So, everybody is supposed to be nice. **We all explore as newbies.**

3) Most librarians do not have time or supervisor permission to get involved in new big IT projects. We designed the IT Interest Group specifically so that it would be low-key, focused on "popular computing" (not server administration), during non-working lunch breaks, and not project-based (we directly produce nothing other than the conversations). If someone wants to start a project, then that is at the discretion of a library director and the work happens outside of the IT group. **We stay focused on the goal of "producing creative thought."** That is what we produce.

4) It is not a committee. The participants include every library staff person with permission to attend. Since it is scheduled during lunch, this could include most librarians. **People show up as their time and interest dictates.**