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The CALI Experience

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THE CALI EXPERIENCE

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The CALI Experience is one my favorite annual events. What other conference gives its attendees both ice cream and Linux? Thanks to a CALL grant, I was able to attend this year's CALI Experience, otherwise known as the Conference on Law School Computing. Held at Nova Southeastern in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, the 2006 conference (titled "Rip, Mix, Learn") was informative and fun. Every session included great new tools, resources, and ideas that I could share with our professors, students, staff, and librarians.

CALI conferences are one of the best places to learn the latest advances in classroom technology. This year, however, sessions did not focus as much on new tools. Instead, presenters described how law schools are using currently-available resources.

A technological law school classroom includes tools for presentation, control, and asynchronous learning. It might include a smart whiteboard to display Internet sites, Word documents, or graphics. Professors can mark up whatever is projected and the smart board will save their annotations. These can be posted later on a website or sent to all students by email. The room might have a smart podium with controls to adjust the lighting in the room, start and stop media presentations, or even close window blinds. For professors who want to create podcasts or post video lectures to their class websites, the room may have built-in recording equipment, complete with microphones and cameras.

Of course, not all classrooms need complete technological set-ups. But knowing what is possible can help professors, librarians, facilities staff, and IT staff plan for future enhancements.

The CALI conference is also one of the best places to learn about new software resources. One of my favorites is Ovation, a program that enhances PowerPoint presentations. Good PowerPoints are not easy to create, but Ovation's enhancements can add dynamic backgrounds and bullet points. Better yet, Ovation features a time-keeper that helps presenters stay on track.

E-books were a hot topic at this conference. New versions of e-book readers will not only allow students to read textbooks on their laptops but will also help study groups collaborate remotely. However, despite their enhancements, electronic text books still have a way to go. E-book software has improved, but reading text on a computer can still be a bit difficult. Moreover, many feature licenses that students (and librarians) will find overly restrictive. For example, some vendors' license provisions may make recovering e-books from a damaged hard drive somewhat cumbersome.

Many of the conference presenters discussed collaborative tools. Applications like Microsoft's SharePoint allow users in different locations to work on the same document. Other examples of collaborative resources included online social calendars like 30 Boxes and AirSet. Some law schools are using these online calendars for media services' reservations.

Del.icio.us is an application which shares bookmarks. Users can add tags and text as well as find similar websites based on bookmarks others have tagged. I created a list of bookmarks for all of the resources I learned of at CALI at http://del.icio.us/debgpi.

The best gadget from this year's conference was NexConcepts' Mobile NoteTaker. This pen stores everything it writes. The data can be uploaded onto a PC. MyScript Notes, an OCR program, then translates the handwritten notes into text. How cool is that?

To learn more about this year's Conference on Law School Computing, visit the CALI website. Be sure to read the CALI blog, featuring an entry for each presentation (with several comments from me). The blog also hosts media files for each presentation along with any handouts or slides.

Websites

CALI Sites

CALI: http://www2.cali.org/

2006 Conference for Law School Computing: http://www2.cali.org/index.php?fuseaction=conference.ViewAgenda&eventid=6

Conference Blog: http://calicon06.classcaster.org/

Collaboration/Great Tools

30 Boxes: http://30boxes.com/

AirSet: http://www.airset.com/

Del.icio.us: http://del.icio.us/

Microsoft SharePoint: http://www.microsoft.com/technet/windowsserver/sharepoint/default.mspx

Mobile NoteTaker: http://www.nexconcepts.com/products/mobile_notetaker/

MyScript Notes: http://www.visionobjects.com/products/application-software/myscript-notes/

Ovation: http://www.seriousmagic.com/products/presentations/ovation-for-powerpoint-templates.cfm ∎