

Learning and Scholarly Technologies at the University of Washington Faculty, TA, and Student Surveys

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Introduction

In order for the University of Washington (UW) to provide essential technology resources and services that meet the changing needs of the UW community, it is vital to gather reliable information about evolving trends. To this end several UW units partnered to survey faculty, teaching assistants (TAs), and students in spring 2008 about their technology use and needs. This is our third triennial survey on this topic. In this poster, we report and discuss data from these surveys related to the technology use of faculty, teaching assistants, and students.

Methods

Procedures: We recruited faculty, TAs, and students via emails that included links to the online surveys. We created the surveys using Catalyst WebQ. During spring 2008, we sent a recruitment email and two reminders to all three groups. We also sent a postcard reminder to nonresponsive faculty. The surveys were confidential, with no identifying information linked to individual responses.

Participants: The faculty recruitment sample was comprised of 3,499 people. The response rate for faculty was 16.2% (N=547). The response rate for TAs was 24.5% (N=233). The student recruitment sample included 5,000 graduate and undergraduate students, with a response rate of 13.8% (N=656). With few exceptions, our respondent samples were representative of their respective groups.

Survey instrument: All three surveys followed the same structure regarding technology use. In the first section, we gathered demographic data (e.g., position/class status) and asked general questions about technology expertise. The section of the survey that we report here was designed to help us understand how technology was used within various teaching and learning contexts in order to meet diverse teaching and learning goals.

We first asked participants to select a context (e.g., "large lecture"). Then we asked them to select a goal that was important within that context (e.g., for students, "access and review course material"). Finally, we asked them to indicate which technologies (e.g., "course or project Web page") they used in their selected context and, more specifically, which technologies they used to meet their selected goal. We then asked participants to choose a second context different from the first and to answer the same set of questions about goals and technology use. This format allowed us to gather data reflecting a broad range of participants' experiences using technology.

Link to complete report: http://catalyst.washington.edu/research_development/papers/2009/2008SurveysReport.pdf



UW Technology, UW Libraries, UW Teaching Academy, the Office of Information Management, the Faculty Council on Educational Technology, the School of Medicine, and the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA)

Results

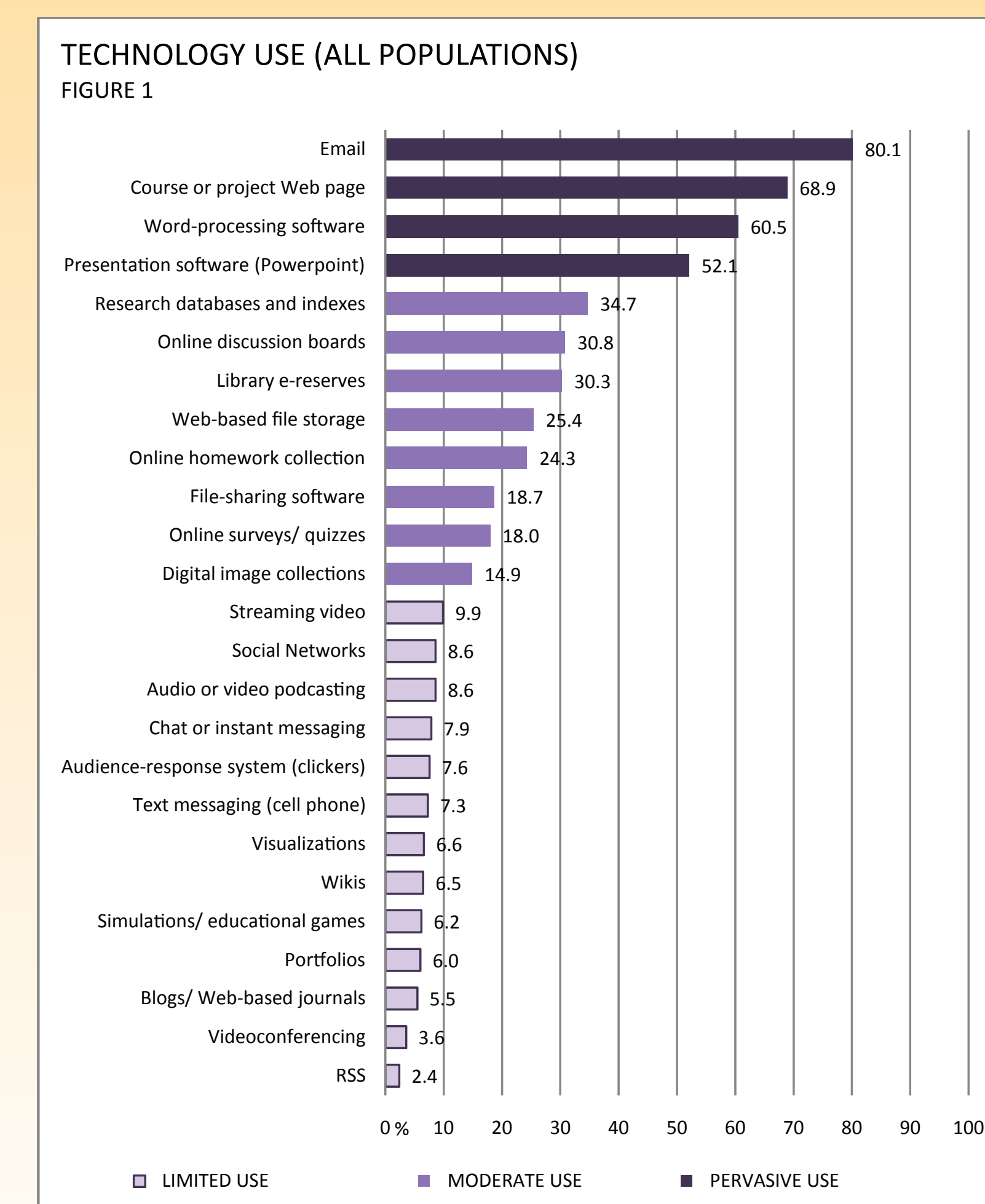


Figure 1 shows how often various technologies were selected, regardless of context, across the three surveys. Some general patterns of technology use hold true regardless of the context or goal selected: a few technologies are consistently used, while several other technologies are seldom used. It is important to note, however, that since all of our technology use questions asked respondents to first select a context and then to select technologies used within that context, these numbers do not encompass all technology use. We divided the technologies listed into three general categories based on natural clusters within the data: pervasive use (selected in more than 50% of Faculty, TA, and student responses across contexts); moderate use (10.0-49.9%); and limited use (less than 10.0%).

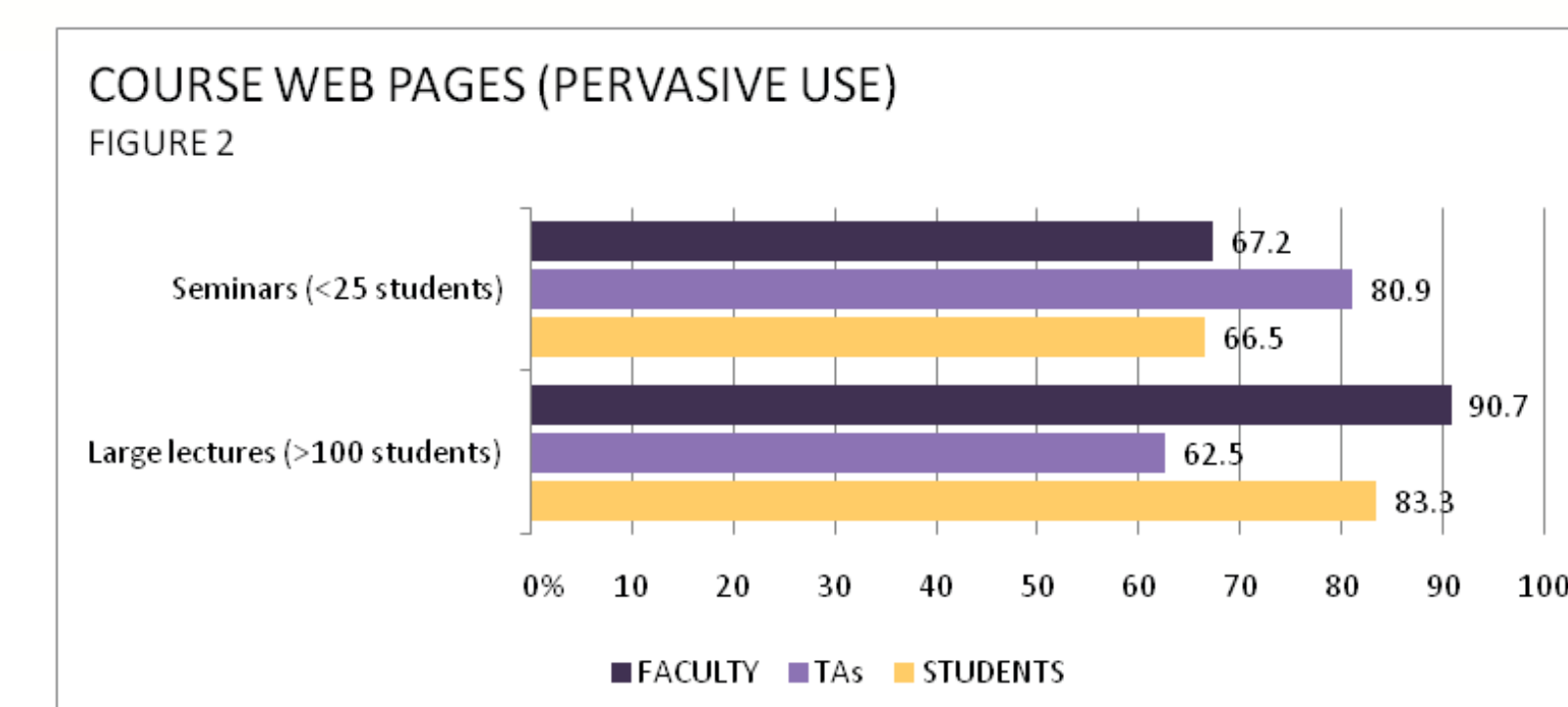


Figure 2 shows course Web page use in seminar and large lecture classes. In large lecture courses 90.7% (n=98) of faculty used course Web pages, compared with 67.2% (n=168) in seminars. There was a similar pattern for students: considerably more used Web pages in large lectures (83.3%; n=214) compared with seminars (66.5%; n=171). For TAs we found a different pattern, with 62.5% (n=15) using a course Web page in large lecture courses and 80.9% (n=89) of TAs using this technology in seminar classes.

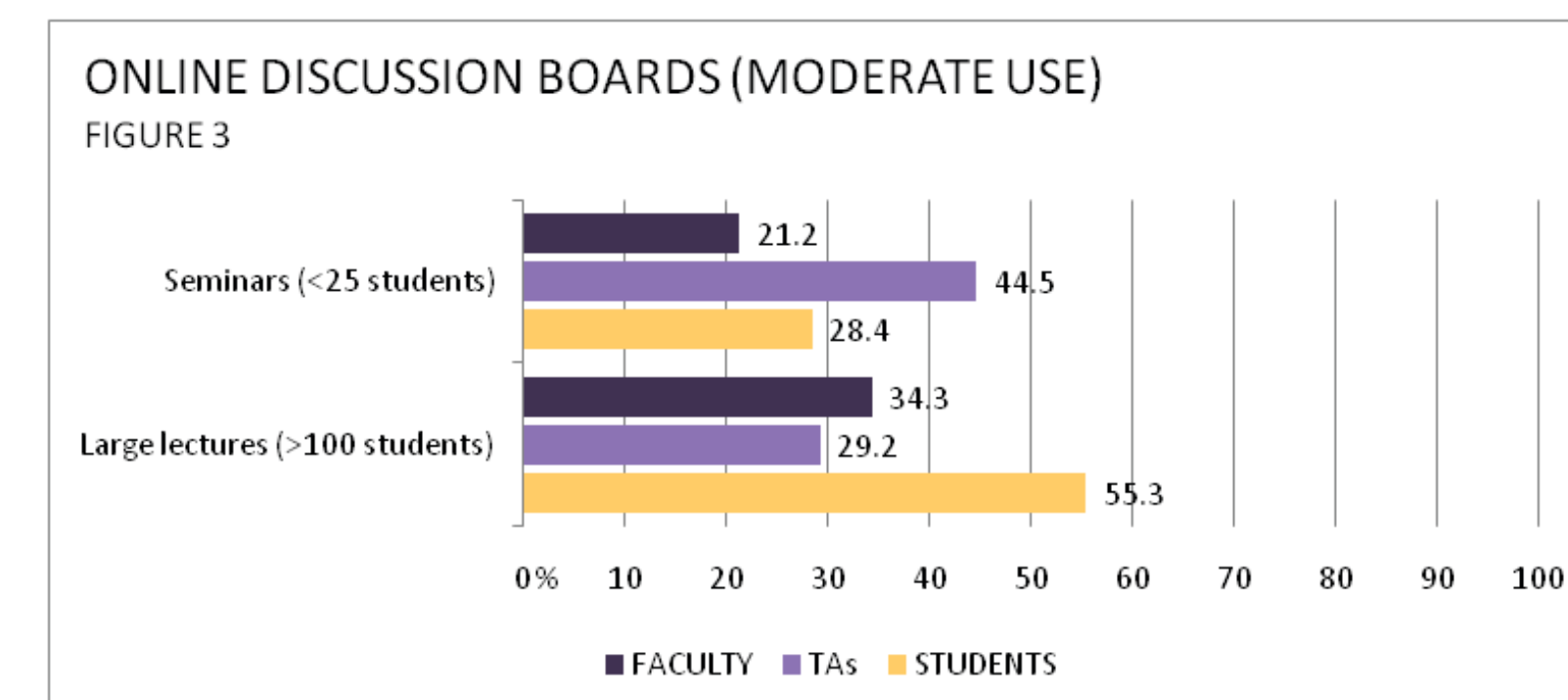


Figure 3 shows online discussion board use in seminar and large lecture classes. For faculty, 34.3% (n=37) used discussion boards in large lectures and 21.2% (n=53) used this tool in seminar courses. TAs used discussion boards considerably more than faculty in seminars (44.5%; n=49), yet they used less in large lectures (29.2%; n=7). Over half of student respondents (55.3%; n=142) used discussion boards in large lecture courses, while 28.4% (n=73) used this tool in seminars.

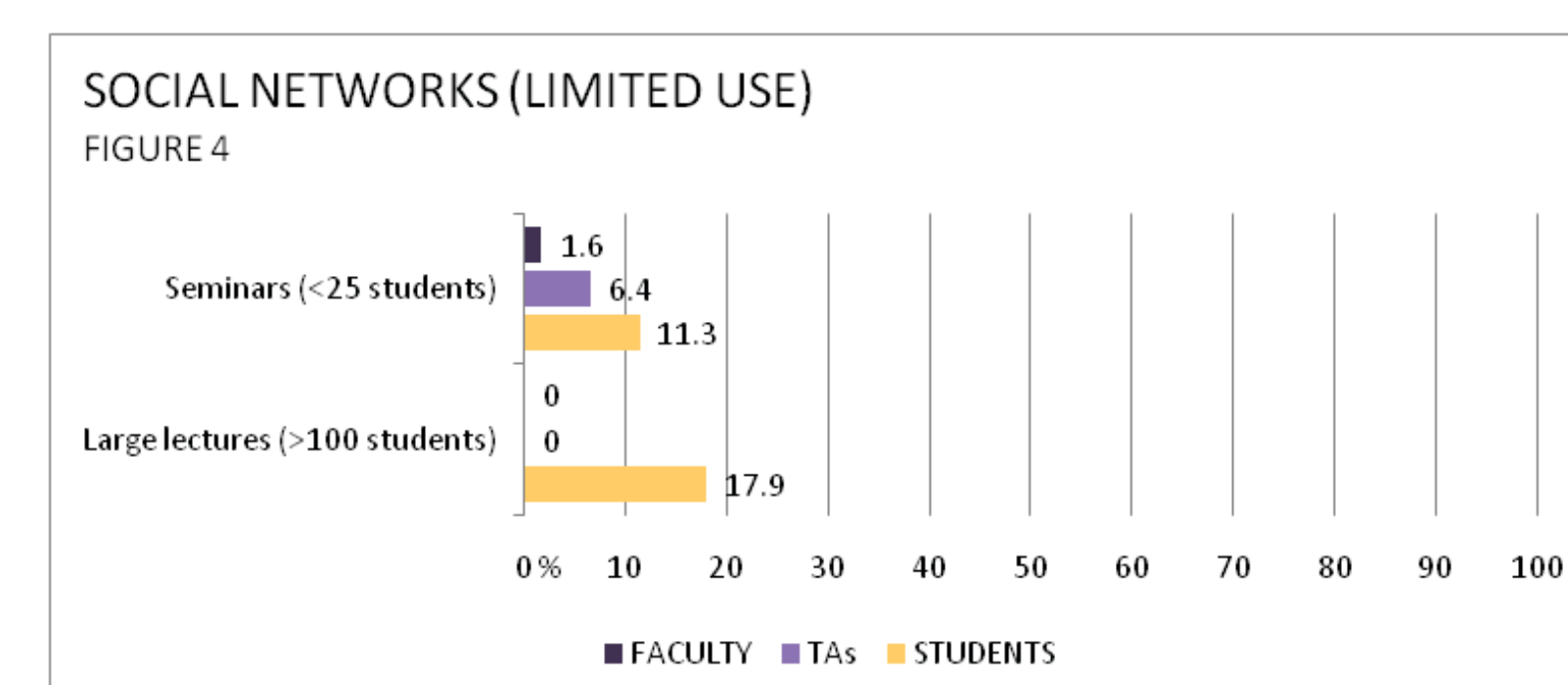


Figure 4 shows the use of social network programs in seminars and large lectures. Faculty use of social networks was extremely low in seminars (1.6%; n=4) and was not used by any faculty participants in large lectures. TA participants also did not use social network programs in large lectures, but considerably more TAs used social networks in seminars (6.4%; n=7) compared with faculty. In stark contrast with TA and faculty use, 17.9% (n=46) of students used social networks in large lectures; 11.3% (n=29) of students used social networks in seminars.

Pervasive Use

The *pervasive use* category included four technologies: email, course or project Web page, word-processing software, and presentation software (Figure 1). All of these technologies are well-established and widely-available, and—perhaps most importantly—are generally used for activities beyond teaching and learning. In addition, these technologies support widely-applicable activities: content delivery and general communication. All of these characteristics make their pervasive use across teaching and learning contexts unsurprising.

Moderate Use

There were eight technologies in the *moderate use* category (Figure 2). This category encompassed several technologies that have well-established and well-supported options offered by the UW. For instance, three of the technologies in this category are provided by UW libraries: research databases and indexes, library e-reserves, and digital image collections. The five other moderately-used technologies all have options available through Catalyst Web Tools: online discussion boards, Web-based file storage, online homework collection, file-sharing software, and online surveys/quizzes. In general, the technologies with moderate use have more specific and narrow functionality than the technologies within the pervasive use category, and also tend to be more interactive. These characteristics may make these technologies more likely to be applied by faculty, TAs, and students in some teaching and learning contexts but not necessarily in all contexts.

Limited Use

The *limited use* category was, by far, the largest, with 13 technologies: streaming video, social networks, audio or video podcasting, chat or instant messaging, audience-response systems, text messaging, visualizations, wikis, simulations / educational games, portfolios, blogs/Web-based journals, videoconferencing, and RSS. Many of these technologies are newer (e.g., social networks or simulations) than are those in the previous two categories, some have costs associated with their use (e.g., videoconferencing or text messaging), and several require faculty, TAs, and students to find and learn how to use and apply the technology largely on their own because there are only minimally-supported options at the UW (e.g., wikis or blogs). All of these characteristics likely contribute to their lower use in teaching and learning contexts.

Conclusions

- Student use in general was higher than faculty and TAs for limited use technologies (Figure 1; Box 1). These results suggest that faculty may have less exposure to some of the technologies that students use.
- Technology use was much more uniform than anticipated: a few technologies were widely used across contexts and goals, while others were seldom used.
- The general patterns of pervasive, moderate and limited technology use seen in Figure 1 held true regardless of teaching or learning context.