

# Technology Committee Report

Presented to the PNC/MLA Board

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## *Committee Members*

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## *Official Charge*

The Technology Committee was established in the spring of 2009 and given the following charge:

The Technology Committee is responsible for investigating emerging technologies, informing the PNC/MLA Board and members of potential uses for the Chapter and the field of medical librarianship, and integrating appropriate technologies into the PNC/MLA web site and communications.

## **Web Conferencing Software Evaluation**

Our first task was to research web conferencing software packages for purchase and use by the PNC Board and committees. Web conferencing would enhance chapter activities by:

- Providing a consistent of meeting location—even when officers change
- Allowing for more frequent meetings
- Giving meeting hosts the ability to make presentations, spreadsheets, and other desktop items viewable to the full complement of meeting attendees
- Making an online chat window available for reporting connection issues or facilitating other text-based communications

## *Methods*

We read some online software reviews and decided to evaluate the following products:

GoToMeeting, Adobe Connect, WebEx, MegaMeeting, DimDim Pro

We conducted formal trials of WebEx, MegaMeeting and DimDim Pro as well as an informal trial, early on in our planning process, of GoToMeeting. For the formal trials, we:

1. Developed a matrix to compare products based on functionality and specifications. The matrix was published as a Google spreadsheet and is editable by any committee member: <http://bit.ly/aq0avg>
2. Wrote a script that allowed us to act as participants in different roles to test the features and functionality of the software.
3. Assigned Roles (leader, initiator of meeting/scheduler, presenter, participant, etc.) to the committee members who participated in each trial.
4. Used SurveyMonkey to collect responses from committee members about their general impressions of the meeting experience.

Summary of Results

Product	General Conclusions
WebEx	<p><u>Possibly recommended.</u> An established company with a reputation for good service. Trial participants were mostly “very satisfied” with WebEx’s performance on presenter and participant tasks.</p>
DimDim Pro or Webinar	<p><u>Possibly recommended.</u> Offers most of the same features as WebEx but at a greatly reduced price. For example:</p> <p>WebEx  <i>Meeting with 18 participants using toll-free telephone add-on, 45 minute meeting</i>            (18 people x .15 cents toll free fee x 45 minutes) + \$69 = \$190.50</p> <p>DimDim  <i>Meeting with 18 participants using toll-free telephone add-on, 45 minute meeting</i>            \$19</p> <p>Another advantage is that no download is required. Software download is often problematic for hospital librarians and others in locked-down computing environments.</p> <p>Trial participants were mostly “satisfied” with DimDim’s performance on presenter and participant tasks; however, the recording and survey tools were found to be confusing.</p>
GoToMeeting	<p><u>Possibly recommended</u> but would need to arrange for another trial. This was the platform for our first meeting as a group. We did not conduct a second formal evaluation because to do so would have required a credit card number.</p>
Adobe Connect	<p><u>Not recommended</u> based on cost. The RML has access to Adobe Connect via the National Institutes of Health subscription. If more RML-PNC collaborative programming is planned (similar to Super Searcher class in 2008) Adobe Connect, through the RML’s subscription, would be a possibility.</p>
MegaMeeting	<p><u>Recommended for special or large events.</u> MLA Headquarters announced an offer to extend access to MegaMeeting to sections and chapters. Prices for chapter meetings start at \$200 for up to 5 participants; price breaks are not realized for fewer than 26 meeting participants. Additionally, someone from MLA HQ – two time zones away – would need to facilitate each meeting. Definitely not cost-effective for committee work or small groups. Possibly an option for a one-time event that would draw a lot of participants, and for which PNC facilitators did not want to concern themselves with technological troubleshooting.</p>

*Range in price depends on:*

- If we need branding
- How many people will be hosting meetings
- How many people will participate in the meetings (maximum number of seats?)
- Whether or not we need to offer a toll-free telephone number
- Whether we pay by the meeting or for a monthly subscription

*General Recommendation for the Board:*

- Poll the committees about if, how, and how often they might like to use web conferencing software.
- Do not commit to an annual subscription this year. It is possible to pay by the month, at least until we gain familiarity with a product and get a better sense of how often it will be used.
- Do not schedule large classes or critical meetings via webinar until we have a few smaller committee meetings under our belts.
- Choose WebEx if overall reliability and usability of special features (recording, polls) are of primary concern. Choose DimDim Pro if cost is an issue or if installing special software is a concern for meeting hosts or participants.

## **Future Activities**

- Respond to Board questions about this report
- Contribute to CE Committee discussions regarding technology-related training needs
- Develop some technology content for the PNC/MLA website