Digital Purple Books Committee Report

Committee

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July 26, 2021

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Executive Summary

The charge of the Digital Purple Books Committee was to explore the possibility of digitizing purple books at UW-Whitewater. The need for digitizing purple books arose due to the highly manual nature of the current purple books process. Digitizing purple books would mean that all materials submitted by faculty for tenure and promotion purposes would be completely digital.

The committee obtained feedback from various stakeholders such as faculty, department chairs, and administrators regarding digitizing purple books. The committee also solicited inputs about processes and systems in use in UW-system and other universities.

Based on the feedback, the committee recommends the following:

1. Implement a new IT system to digitize the purple books process.
2. Ensure that the new IT system has key usability and security characteristics
3. Pilot test the new IT system with a group of faculty.
4. Implement change management practices to enable faculty to adapt to changes due to the new IT system

1. Introduction

The Digital Purple Books Committee was charged by the Faculty Senate to explore the possibility of digitizing purple books at UW-Whitewater. Purple Book refers to the physical binder a faculty maintains for the purposes of promotion and tenure. Each faculty member is provided with a purple book to document their research, teaching and service activities for each year during their tenure clock. Purple books contain the following material, along with administrative paperwork: a) research: such as journal articles and conference articles, b) teaching: such as teaching evaluations, course syllabi and exams, and 3) service: such as committee work and student organization work, and other material as appropriate.

The need for digitizing purple books arose since maintaining purple books and routing them through the various stakeholders is a highly manual process. It involves faculty maintaining the purple books, which can get incredibly heavy, to the books being routed physically to many different places. Further, the information flow about decisions to administrators and faculty should also be managed manually. This can lead to loss of material, while making the whole process cumbersome and slow. These process inefficiencies have been noted over the years, which led to the Faculty Senate considering changing the physical purple books to a digital purple book. Digitizing purple books would mean that the physical purple books process that is currently being followed will be completely transitioned to a digital platform. All materials such as journal articles, conference articles, and teaching evaluations will only be stored and routed to various stakeholders in digital format.

The Digital Purple Books Committee undertook several tasks to accomplish this objective, to provide recommendations to the faculty senate. We obtained perspectives about digitizing purple books from various stakeholders in the process. This included the faculty, Department Chairs, Deans, Constituency Committee Chairs, the Provost and the Chancellor. We contacted and collected information from the different UW-system universities and peer institutions in other states about the faculty promotion and tenure process, and the digital platform they used, if any. We studied the existing purple book policy in the faculty handbook to document any issues with digitizing it. This report provides a detailed look at the methodology, findings and recommendations.

In the next section, we describe the purple books process we currently follow at UWW. Next, we detail the methodology, followed by a discussion of the findings. This is followed by an explanation of the processes/systems followed by other institutions. Finally, we conclude with our recommendations to the Faculty Senate.

2. Purple Books Process

Tenure-track faculty are required to maintain all their documentation of research, teaching and service activities in the purple book. Each year, faculty submit their purple book either for consultation or full-review. If the purple book is submitted for consultation, it is reviewed by the tenured faculty and the chair of the corresponding department, and the decision is transmitted to the faculty. The decision is also documented in the purple book.

If the purple book is submitted for full-review, it is reviewed by the tenured faculty and chair of the department, college constituency committee, college Dean, Provost and Chancellor. At each level, the decision or recommendation is transmitted to faculty, as well as the next reviewer in the workflow. This is done through a letter in the office mail and through an email. The decisions at each level are also documented in the purple book.

If the purple book is submitted for tenure, it goes through the full-review process, and the decision is either forwarded to the UW Board for approval or is rejected and sent to the faculty.

It is important to note that the purple book needs to be *manually* reviewed by each reviewer in the workflow. Further, the information flow needs to be *manually* routed through the reviewers (committees/administrator) in the workflow, and also need to be *manually* routed to faculty. Therefore, both the physical movement of the purple book through the workflow, and the information flow to faculty, committees and administrators are highly manual activities.

3. Methodology

3.1 Feedback from Faculty

The Digital Purple Books Committee sought to obtain feedback from all faculty through a Qualtrics survey in spring 2021. The survey consisted of questions on whether the faculty supported digitizing purple books, the benefits of digitizing, concerns with digitizing, if the faculty is willing to serve in the digital purple books work, and demographics questions. A total of 146 completed responses were obtained from faculty by the deadline for the survey. The survey had broad representation from different colleges, ranks and years of experience. The questions used in the survey are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Faculty Survey

Concept	Questions
Support for Digitizing Purple Books	Do you support digitizing the Purple Book and the tenure review process? (Yes/No/Maybe)

Benefits of Digitizing Purple Books	2. Please rate the following statements about digitizing purple books on a scale of 1 - 7 (1 - Strongly Disagree to 7 - Strongly Agree).
	   a. Digitizing purple books will ensure that the purple book is complete and accurate (for the purple book review process).
	   b. Digitizing purple books will ensure that purple books can be accessed easily for review purposes.
	   c. Digitizing purple books will make it easy to prepare and submit the Purple Book.
	   d. Digitizing purple books will make it easy to collect/compile information for yearly review reports.
	
	4. (Open-ended question) Do you perceive any other benefits/advantages to digitizing purple books? Please provide your feedback below.

Concerns with Digitizing Purple Books	5. The following statements are about concerns with digitizing purple books. Please specify your perception of the following concerns (YES - It is a concern, NO - It is not a concern, MAYBE - It maybe is a concern.)
	   a. Cost of new software platform.
	   b. Ensuring secure access to material.
	   c. Issues of copyright/ownership of Purple Book material.
	   d. Ensuring long-term archival access to electronic records.
	   e. Ensuring confidentiality during the review process.
	   f. Resistance from colleagues to using an electronic process.
	   g. Making changes to existing College/Department policies that is already working well.
	   h. Finding a software platform that meets the needs of the University.
	   i. Other (provide inputs in the box)

	6. (Open-ended question) Do you have any other concerns about digitizing purple books? Please provide your feedback below.
Participation in Digital Purple Books work	7. If UWW decides to implement Digital Purple Books, would you be interested in being involved in that process? Please select your choice below. • I would be willing to serve on a committee working on implementation of the new process. • I would like to receive updates on the process from the committee working group(s). • I would like to get updates on the process from normal channels only (Faculty Senate, Colleges, Departments etc). • I do not want to be involved in the process or receive any updates. 8. You have indicated that you would either be willing to serve on a committee or receive email updates, if digital purple books are implemented. Please provide your UWW email address below so we may share your information with any working group(s).
Demographics	1. Your title: a. Assistant Professor b. Associate Professor c. Professor d. Other 2. College/Affiliation: a. College of Arts and Communication b. College of Business and Economics c. College of Education and Professional Studies d. College of Integrated Studies e. College of Letters and Sciences f. Other 3. Number of years of employment at UW-Whitewater: a. < 5 years b. 6 – 10 years c. 11 – 15 years d. 16 – 20 years e. 21 – 25 years f. 26 – 30 years g. 31 – 35 years h. 36 – 40 years i. > 40 years

3.2 Feedback from Stakeholders (Other than Faculty)

The Digital Purple Books Committee conducted the following steps to obtain inputs from various stakeholders other than faculty. We contacted all the department chairs and Deans of all the UW-Whitewater colleges to solicit their feedback through emails. Further, we connected with constituency committee chairs to seek their feedback. Finally, we contacted the Provost and Chancellor to solicit their feedback. The questions we used for obtaining feedback is provided below.

1. *What are things you like about the current purple books process?*
2. *What are things you do not like about the current purple books process?*
3. *What are your thoughts on digitizing purple books? Is this a good idea? Do you have any reservations about digitizing this process?*
4. *What are your expectations if purple books are digitized? (E.g., Workflow, Adding files/media, security etc.).*
5. *Do you think digitizing purple books would help you in accreditation reports or other activities?*
6. *Any other comments …*

3.3 Feedback from Other Universities

The committee contacted and obtained feedback on their faculty evaluation processes from several UW-system campuses and peer institutions in other states. The universities we contacted are: UW-Eau Claire, UW-Green Bay, UW-La Crosse, UW-Oshkosh, UW-Platteville, UW-River Falls, UW-Stevens Point, UW-Stout, UW-Superior, Northern Michigan University, Michigan Technological University, Monmouth University, Illinois State University, Western Michigan University, Minnesota State University. The questions we used for obtaining feedback from other universities is provided below.

Do you have a "digital" or "electronic" platform that you use for this purpose? We're specifically interested to learn:

1. *What is the name of the electronic platform/software you use?*
2. *What year did you begin using it (installation year)?*
3. *What is the cost (an estimate is fine)?*
4. *Any other comments/advice you wish to provide.*

3.4 Purple Book Policy

Finally, we analyzed the existing purple book policy to understand if there are any changes needed while digitizing the purple books. We discuss the findings in the next section.

4 Discussion of findings

4.1 Findings from Faculty Survey

Faculty survey findings show that 65.06% of faculty respondents chose "yes" to digitizing purple books, 10.27% chose "no," and 24.65% chose "May be" (Figure 1). Therefore, a majority of the faculty respondents have expressed support for digitizing purple books.
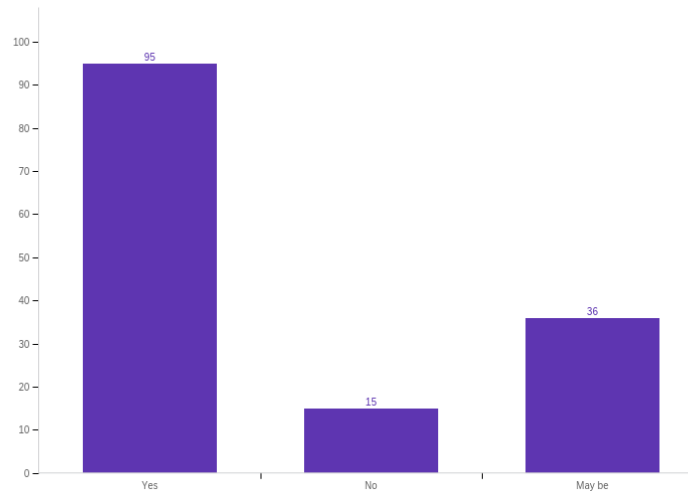

Figure 1. Support for Digitizing Purple Books

Faculty expressed high degree of agreement (Rating: 5 and above) with the benefits of digitizing purple books such as for ensuring that the purple book is complete, can be accessed easily, will make it easy to prepare and submit the purple book, and make it easy to collect/compile information (Figure 2).
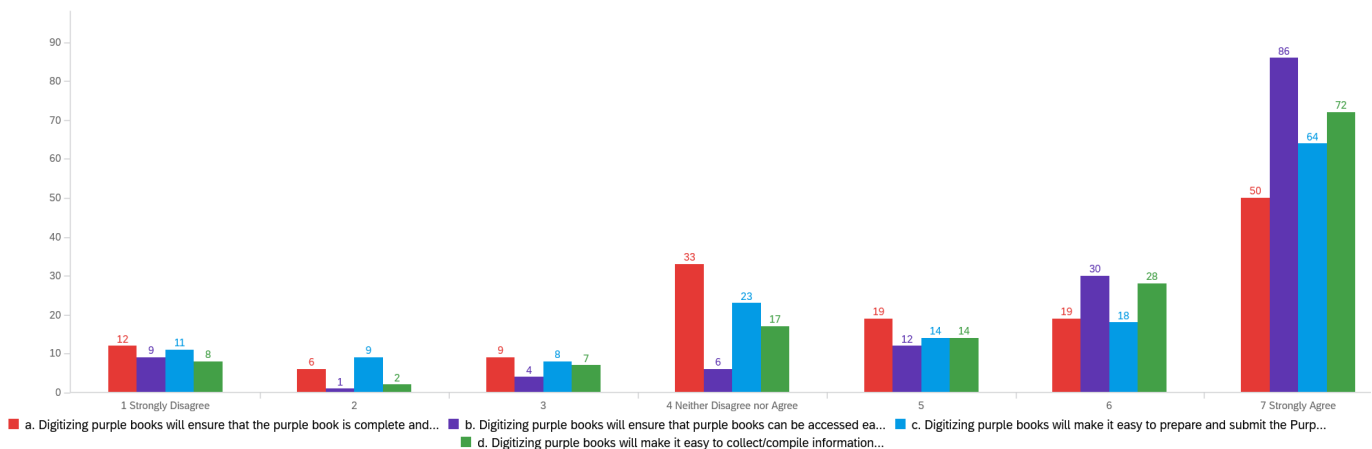

Figure 2. Benefits of Digitizing Purple Books

Survey findings reveal that the concerns about digitizing purple books were equivocal, with more respondents selecting "No" concerns for many questions (Figure 3). However, it is important to point out that several respondents also chose "Yes" to this question. So, ratings from this

question, as well as the open-ended questions show that a significant number of faculty have concerns about ensuring secure access to material, ensuring long-term archival access, ensuring confidentiality, resistance from colleagues to using electronic process etc.
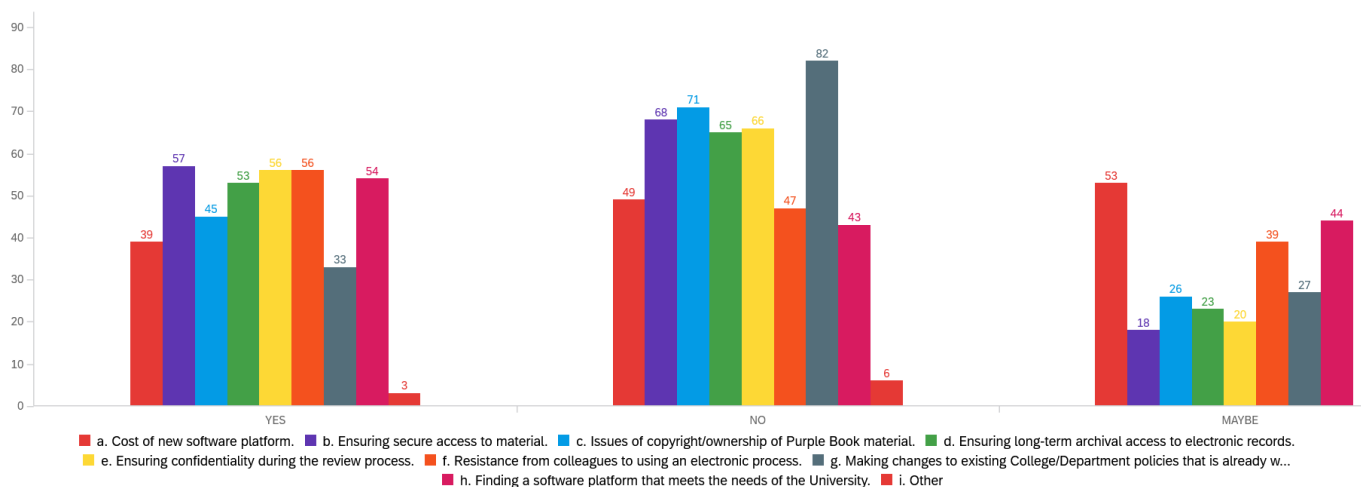

Figure 3. Concerns with Digitizing Purple Books

4.2 Stakeholder Feedback (Other than faculty)

College of Arts and Communication: This is a summary of the responses to the Digital Purple Book questionnaire from the professor in charge of organizing Purple Books for the Communication department, Susan Wildermuth, and the Dean of the College of Arts and Communication, Dr. Eileen Hayes. Both were very much in favor of moving to a digital system. Dr. Wildermuth expressed that a digital system should be straightforward and easy to use. She wants the entire process to be more 'streamlined,' adding, 'So one idea is a simple annual form, and then a series of attachments—similar to when we get documents from applicants for jobs.' She also emphasized that the process of entering information into a digital system by using forms should not be overly burdensome to faculty who have been using the current system compared to new faculty who may start their Purple Book process using a new digital system. She wondered if there could be some incentive offered for faculty who are caught between the current system and a new one, to compensate for the extra time and effort needed to transfer information from one way of doing things to another. Dean Hayes also stated that a 'streamlined' process would be 'great' because 'faculty/academic staff evaluation is necessary.' She added that a digital system could lessen the personal risks associated with a disease like COVID-19 or other possible future outbreaks, stressing the system needs to be secure. She expects a digital system to provide 'security, workflow, ways to review text, visual (art), and sonic materials.'

College of Business and Economics: Feedback from the various stakeholders in the College of Business and Economics indicated overall support for transitioning from a manual purple books process to digital purple books. A summary paraphrasing the inputs provided by various stakeholders is provided below. Some of the points emphasized by the department chairs and

constituency committee chair, while expressing their support for digitizing purple books are as follows: a) Should be easy to use for the reviewers to keep deadlines in check and avoid missing materials b) Should be simple to upload documents for each year c) Should enable addition of a variety of evidence d) Should provide access rights only to faculty and e) Should ensure alignment with digital measures. Some inputs were also provided in terms of what is actually needed in purple books i.e., purple books need to only detail research, teaching and student evaluations, and service. Therefore, something that would be concise with fill-in boxes would be ideal. Digital platform may also mean that the number of documents submitted could go to extremes, similar to olden days when candidates would submit *crates* of documents. Therefore, limits may need to be placed on number of documents being submitted. The Dean of CoBE, Dr. John Chenoweth stated that he imagines a well-built digital system would make the purple book process better. However, he opined that the system implementation might make it harder for accreditation purposes, unless the system was integrated within Digital Measures. Faculty may also be protective of their purple books and may be hesitant to have data in purple books used for other purposes. Further, he stated his concern that the costs of implementation may outweigh the benefits in these budget times. We need to quantify the financial savings of this initiative. He further questioned if reviewing digital purple books would be any less time consuming than reviewing physical purple books, since the number of purple books that needs reviewing is greatly diminishing.

College of Education & Professional Studies: A strong majority support developing a digital process for purple books with the following recommendations: 1) early work on the design process should include ICIT and the LTC (platform integration, thorough testing over time with faculty input, debugging before release, and ongoing support plan for implementation); 2) system chosen needs to account for stakeholders' responsibilities (ongoing access for faculty additions prior to due date, ensure Deans' assistants have access in the workflow, store records over time/years, enable view of decision letters for relevant parties when posted), and be clear and easy for all to navigate; 3) systems to explore might be similar to grant and post-tenure reviews, Audit and Review platform, Canvas; and 4) be mindful of ownership (workflow and access restrictions), as this system might not be appropriate to integrate/pull from for program level reports.

One department chair recommended that the process be revised so that all Purple Books are due on the same date with a set timeline for all reviews (except first-year faculty in the spring semester). Perhaps a revision to the review process timeline could be undertaken by the committee with that purview in tandem with development of the digital process.

College of Integrated Studies: Since all current tenured and tenure-track faculty began their service when the College was still part of the two-year UW Colleges campuses, there are no faculty in CIS who have not comfortably used a digital version of a tenure dossier. The previous iteration was simple and effective: tenure-track faculty used Adobe Photoshop to compile a single pdf, which was then sent to the department chair. The chair disseminated the pdf dossier to the department's executive committee for review. Current tenure-track faculty have expressed a preference for this simple, digital-only form of the Purple Book.

College of Letters and Sciences: The Dean of the College and the Chair of the Constituency Review Committee are strongly in favor of moving to an electronic Purple Book process. Both cited themes mentioned among feedback received from Chairs: 1)size/handling of PBs 2)completeness/correctness of PBs and 3) ease of access particularly given the challenges due to COVID this semester. Chairs do note that a current strength of the process is that these PB documents are tangible (not electronic). Most, though not all, Chairs are supportive of digitizing PBs but do note concerns around security and ownership of material. There are also mixed opinions on issues around digitizing the PB. Some in the College are in favor of trying to repurpose existing applications for digitizing PBs while others are concerned this would be problematic. A final theme involves the need for communication to departments and faculty about the PB process (both as it exists now and about ideas for digitizing PBs) and on-going consultation on issues moving forward if we decided to pursue digitized PBs.

Provost: The Provost, Dr. Greg Cook stated that it will be very helpful to digitize purple books. The system should be a) secure, access-restricted and confidential, b) support upload, download and storage of a variety of documents, c) have efficient and intuitive workflow, d) send reminders, notices and communications and e) support the personnel processes at UWW. Further, he stated that archiving is important, and if an outside vendor is used, there must be a guarantee of data transfer if vendor's product is discontinued. Therefore, he recommended that an in-house system be built by ICIT, as was done for the PTR system, COS, and audit and review portal. He also stated that developing a system with ICIT will likely take $100,000 to develop and then $25,000 per year for maintenance, support, and updating; all costs of staff time for the project.

Chancellor: The Chancellor, Dr. Dwight Watson stated that his work on the purple books is at the end, and the part he enjoyed the most is reading through articles. He opined that if faculty CVs had links to actual manuscripts, this would be very helpful.

4.3 Processes/Systems used by UW and other institutions

Table 2 provides a list of universities and the faculty evaluation process followed in each of the universities. If the universities had any digital aspect to the faculty evaluation, we also captured information on the software being used, the year it was started, and the associated cost if any. As listed, some universities have moved to digital platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and have adopted Canvas, D2L along with shared drives. Some universities seem to use PDFs and SharePoint systems. Some universities have transitioned to a full-fledged digital system such as Digital Measures/Watermark, Interfolio Faculty 180 platform and BPLogix.

Table 2. Universities and Faculty Evaluation Processes

University	Faculty Evaluation Process	Software Used	Year Started	Cost
UW System Universities				
UW-Eau Claire	Digital	BPLogix	Spring 2021	No cost: Covered by UW-System
UW-Green Bay	Manual and Digital	PDF, Sharepoint, Reviewing Interfolio Faculty 180 Platform		No cost
UW-La Crosse	Digital	Digital Measures/Watermark	2007-2008	Approximately $ 37,000 per year; Five-year contracts
UW-Oshkosh	Digital (Post-pandemic)	Canvas	Fall 2020	Canvas already used on campus
UW-Platteville	Digital	Interfolio Faculty 180	2019	Year 1 $75,000, Years 2 and 3 $50,000 each
UW-River Falls	Digital (Post-pandemic)	Canvas, Shared drive with restricted access	2020	No cost
UW-Stevens Point	Manual and Digital	PDF, Sharepoint, Zoom	Fall 2020	Already used on campus
UW-Stout	Manual for tenure, Digital for promotion to full and sabbaticals	Perceptive Content, SharePoint	2017-2018 pilot, in 4th cycle	Already used on campus
UW-Superior	Digital (Post-pandemic)	PDF, Sharepoint, Zoom	Fall 2020	System covers the cost for our institutions to have SharePoint and Zoom.
Other Universities				
Illinois State University	Digital	PDF or other electronic format.	Spring 2019	No cost
Michigan Technological University	Electronic TPR Binders	Google drive/folder	2019	no additional cost (already using Google suite)

Minnesota State University Mankato	Digital	PDF	2020-2021	No cost
Monmouth University	Digital	eCampus through D2L Brightspace Core with Professional Plus	2013	20-21 AY $163,000 but that includes courses, too
Northern Michigan University	Manual			
Western Michigan University	Manual	PDF or other electronic format.	Fall 2020	No cost

4.4 Analysis of Purple Book Policy

In researching the Purple Book policy for faculty in the faculty manual, three areas of concern were identified for a transition to a digital system that maintains current standards and requirements: security, access, and usability. All documents will need to be placed in a system that maintains the current workflow and level of access for submitters and reviewers. Digital signatures and timestamps will need to be included for all reappointment, tenure, and promotion documents that require review, rebuttal, reports of decisions and approvals within a timeline that contains specific milestones and time limits. All documents will need to be secure, and access will need to be limited to persons with proper credentials. All portfolio documents will need to be entered or uploaded to a system, or both. For evidence supporting portfolio information, there will need to be means of entering, uploading, and displaying text, images, and other media formats as needed depending on the department. Current requirements for 'hard copies' of documents will need to be modified to reflect formatting for a digital system. A system that incorporates visual design that is responsive, designed for entering and displaying information well on a variety of screen sizes (desktop, laptop, tablet, smart phone) would be in keeping with general expectations for usability in web sites and applications.

5 Recommendations

Based on the feedback from faculty, various stakeholders, other universities, and the analysis of purple books process, the Digital Purple Books Committee would like to make the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Implement a new IT System to digitize purple books process

UW-Whitewater should transition to digital purple books process, where faculty will submit all their purple book materials using a new IT system, and the submitted materials will be routed through the IT system to all the reviewers. The system should also provide the means for the routing of information (reminders, notices and communications) among reviewers, and to faculty.

In this regard, we recommend that UWW consider the following IT systems for digitizing purple books: Activity Insight by Digital Measures/Watermark, BPLogix used in the UW-System and Interfolio Faculty 180 platform.

Further, we recommend that the use of PDF and shared folders should be considered as the least preferred option.

Recommendation #2: Ensure that the new IT system has key usability and security characteristics

The new IT system for the digital purple books process should ensure the following:

a. The system should fit the needs of the faculty at UWW. This means that faculty inputs would need to be obtained for customizing or modifying the system.
b. The system should ensure seamless workflow i.e., Purple books material need to be routed from the faculty to other stakeholders seamlessly through a system
c. The system should ensure seamless routing of information among reviewers and faculty (send reminders, notices and communications)
d. The system should ensure security, privacy, confidentiality and faculty ownership of the submitted materials.
e. The system should be easy to use for faculty i.e., ease of use in uploading, downloading or modifying materials.
f. The system should be efficient to use i.e., It should take substantially less time than the manual process.

Recommendation #3: Pilot test the new IT system with a group of faculty

We recommend that the new IT system should undergo testing phase(s) with a group of faculty to ensure the characteristics specified in Recommendation #2 are met.

Faculty can be drawn from various colleges so that there is broad representation in the pilot group. This will ensure that any issues in the system will be resolved before it is rolled out to all faculty.

The committee has collected names and emails of faculty who are interested in participating in digital purple book work. We would be happy to share this information to the respective committee or body.

Recommendation #4: Implement change management practices to enable faculty to adapt to changes due to the new IT system

We recommend that the following be implemented to enable faculty to adapt to changes:

a. The IT system should be "phased-in" over a period of 2 years
b. Faculty closer to tenure submission should be excluded from submitting all their materials digitally.
c. Faculty participating in the 1st year program should be provided training on digital purple books.
d. LTC/ICIT should provide technical support during the transition to digital purple books.

6 Conclusion

The Digital Purple Books Committee would like to sincerely thank the faculty senate for providing us the opportunity to explore the possibility of digitizing purple books at UWW.

As evidenced in this report, a majority of the responding faculty and administrators have expressed support for digitizing purple books at UW-Whitewater. Faculty and administrators also agreed on the benefits from digitizing, while expressing some concerns with the implementation of the new IT system.

We recommend that UWW move towards digitizing purple books using a new IT system, taking into account various aspects with respect to the choice of the new IT system, usability and security characteristics, pilot testing and implementing change management practices.