MIS 111 Freshmen Honors Showcase

Bulb App

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Executive Summary

Bulb is a website that allows users to post information, whether that be text video, or image. In this essay, we will prove how Bulb could serve as an applicable forum for professors to post their notes for class, and have students view and learn material at the University of Arizona.

Having a central location for all material, and making that location as streamline as possible limits the loads on professors. But not only that, when all course material covering for instance, a specific unit, is in one focal area, student frustration is also eliminated. Studying for tests and writing essays no longer requires opening and downloading several different documents from varying sources. Everything, from text to video clips, is on one central page.

Also, because of its highly navigable nature, Bulb could become usable for any faculty member that might want to implement it. Not only does it offer a central location for information, but each Bulb created has a discussion board underneath it. Students can ask questions, and an email alert will inform professors that a question has been asked. But what is even more beneficial, is that students can answer the questions of their peers, which would lighten the burden on professors while simultaneously promoting class interaction and discussion. We think Bulb could serve as the perfect medium for professors at University to share key information with their students, while eliminating the frustrations of posting powerpoints, word documents, and varying links to D2L.
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Bulb

Overall, our objective is to spread awareness of Bulb and its usefulness to professors at the University of Arizona. Our hope is that the website can be utilized by professors to publish their lessons, notes, and other class materials. Bulb provides one central space for notes, videos, and links to be posted, making material more accessible to students. Not only that, but Bulb provides a discussion section underneath each page that is created, making it possible for both professors and students to collaborate on thoughts. This also serves to facilitate online class discussions. In adopting Bulb, professors would have a user-friendly mode of providing students with information that can be accessed through D2L with a simple link. For students, Bulb eliminates the issue of constantly having several tabs open on D2L when studying for tests or writing papers. With a clean and simple design template, the focus on Bulb can be the material. We hope after adopting our recommendation, several instructors will utilize Bulb, and feel as though their lives are made easier through this website. The ability to directly copy and paste links from YouTube, and have them appear as videos on the Bulb page have the ability to make lessons more concise. Eliminating the process of opening video links and waiting for them to load, would provide more time for actual class discussion. Bulb's main purpose is to create a smooth-operating class, whether it be inside a classroom or on a virtual capacity.

Product Assessment

Bulb is such a useful tool for educators, students, or professionals and it helps users create content easily and efficiently. For teachers especially, there are some
wonderful features that allow their pages to be seamlessly created and is a great addition to any current school website such as D2L. Teachers and students can save time by having all of the necessary information in one space where they can ask or answer questions and communicate with classmates.

After browsing the website, it is clear that Bulb’s main target market is educators and students. Although the information page of the site reads, “Bulb is for Everyone”, there is a large emphasis on education. This is demonstrated in the large section of the website that is labeled Bulb for Teachers, in which they offer a Pro service. The Pro account costs $90 per year, but there is a discount for teachers which makes the account only $50 per year. One of the main perks is that this account is private; this proves similar to a closed group page on Facebook. It allows teachers to create their own group and invite their students to join, so only people the teacher invites are able to see the content. Then students can then post their pages to the teacher’s account. This makes it easy for the teacher to find and navigate the students’ pages and have everything in one convenient location. However, a basic account that allows you to access other pages, publish your own creations, and ask questions, is free to create.

Bulb is a private company, based out of Fort Collins, Colorado. There are currently 4 full-time employees and 5 part-time employees. At this time, there is no advertising revenue and after talking with one of the employees, they say that they are not planning to add advertisements in the future. Bulb is still in the growth phase, so their revenue comes from the Pro accounts

Bulb can be accessed on any computer or cell phone with Internet access and is delivered through a vendor hosted website. There is currently not an app for either
iPhone or Android, but we are predicting that they will be looking to expand and include this feature in the near future.

**Proposed Instructional Activity**

As a group, we decided that the class that is best suited to our website, Bulb, is Advanced Writing and Critical Thinking: Emphasis on Mysteries, an honors course. There are multiple reasons why we identified this class as being compatible with Bulb, ranging from the site’s accessibility, ability to incorporate outside sources and simple navigation. The main reason we chose this class is the teacher’s style of instruction. Though her class is structured as more discussion based and student lead, during class she uses multiple links to videos on YouTube, websites and other forms of media, to convey the lesson. The professor also writes down any class-sourced ideas and posts them to D2L. Bulb offers multiple features that become useful for this class in particular for these reasons. Similar to a PowerPoint, Bulb has headers and body text, but it is much easier to add a video on Bulb than it is on PowerPoint. There is the option to enter a YouTube video link on Bulb that causes it to be visible directly on the screen, it is not necessary to click on a link to open a tab when presenting the information like on PowerPoint. Also, for students to access Bulb, only a link has to be posted to D2L once, and the teacher will not have to be concerned about adding each individual link, image, or document to the D2L site. Lastly, a specific reason we chose Advanced Writing and Critical Thinking: Emphasis on Mysteries as our class is the professor has a good understanding of technology and is capable of quickly learning how to use a new site, especially one like Bulb which is clearly labeled and easy to navigate. It is for these reasons that we chose Advanced Writing and Critical Thinking: Emphasis on Mysteries.
Bulb is a useful tool inside a classroom because it can used similar to a PowerPoint. The main difference between Bulb and PowerPoint is that Bulb does not have multiple slides, but rather one continuous page. The professor would be able to scroll down the page to show what would have otherwise been one slide at a time on PowerPoint. An advantage of this is that if students are not finished taking notes on one section, the professor can continue the presentation, but still display the previous slide so students can keep up with notes at a pace that is good for them. A way Bulb can be used outside of class by students is as a study tool for exams. Since all the information that will be on the exam is available at one place, students will not have to click from one PowerPoint to another, which can be confusing when students are trying to retain large amounts of information for an exam. This is also a useful tool for students and the teacher when exams approach because students have the ability to ask questions on a Bulb presentation. However, any other student can reply to the question so the professor does not have to take the time to answer every students’ questions while presenting a learning opportunity to other students at the same time. By students asking question, it also presents a way for the professor to keep track of which students are using Bulb to study. There are a variety of ways that Bulb can be utilized in this class.

If this website is adopted and used by the professor, we believe that Advanced Writing and Critical Thinking: Emphasis on Mysteries would be become more enjoyable for students because of its organization. This class was chosen specifically because of how the lectures are set up and how those are related to the exams. Bulb can be used by the professor to present in class, but then in turn can be used by the students to study for tests at a more efficient pace because they will not have to study from multiple
documents and scattered links, but rather from one area where all the material is organized neatly. Another advantage to this for the professor is she will not have to create a study guide for each exam which will save her time while also benefitting the students because they will have fewer assignments to be concerned about. Bulb is a site that can used in place of PowerPoint and as an improvement to D2L. PowerPoint presentations are added to D2L by the professor for students to access, but Bulb can be created once and will not have to be uploaded on any other site. The professor needs to only paste the link to the Bulb website on D2L so students can easily locate it, but then there is nothing else that needs to be done. Once the Bulb presentation has been created, it is ready to be used right away, all that is needed is a way to access the internet and a Wi-Fi connection. If Bulb is incorporated into Advanced Writing and Critical Thinking: Emphasis on Mysteries, there are many ways it would be beneficial to both the professor and the students.

**Feasibility/Design Assessment**

As we delved deeper into the features that Bulb.com offered, our group decided that the site would be best suitable for Professor Jennifer McStotts' class. We specifically discussed the use of the website in her 208H: Advanced Writing and Critical Thinking (An Emphasis on Mysteries) class. This semester she taught a higher level English course that often utilized videos, photos, and several websites. During our interview with Professor McStotts, we received positive feedback regarding our pitch. Constantly throughout our interview with Professor McStotts, she expressed several times how useful the website would be as an alternative to D2L, in terms of posting content. She specifically mentioned how Bulb could be used to share class materials
with students in a more simplified and easier method. She appreciated the linear aesthetic of the website since that was a feature that D2L did not provide. Another positive comment that she had was regarding the discussion feature of the website. She mentioned how it provided a more casual environment for students to ask and answer questions which encouraged participation.

However, when we asked about the cons regarding the use of the product in a class setting, in an attempt to get a truly balanced evaluation of the website, Professor McStotts had one major concern. She mentioned that there could be certain professors who would have an issue with the idea of posting their material online, without being able to control who had access to the information. Though she personally did not see this as a problem that she had, she mentioned that some professors view their material as intellectual property and would consider this as a problem. Professor McStotts’ feedback definitely increased our awareness regarding the pros and cons about the website. As students, there were certain aspects about the website that we didn’t necessarily consider to be valuable or the be problematic. Having a professor’s opinion helped improve our understanding about what would be beneficial to them as the primary consumers of the product.

Our technical assessment of the product has yielded a low-maintenance outcome. Bulb is an easily accessible website that requires no extra software installation. The only technical requirements that Bulb needs in order to be useful is connection to the Internet. Other than internet connection, students do not need to download any extra software onto their laptops/computers. The website also does not demand any specific bandwidth, memory, or hardware requirements. As long as
students have access to the internet, they will have access to Bulb. Bulb is compatible with all systems as it is a fairly simple website that only requires the most basic processing systems that all computers/laptops are already equipped with. This feature makes it accessible across all types of desktops, laptops, and even handheld devices. Though there is not an app that is directly associated with Bulb, the website can be accessed through smartphones, tablets, and other devices that can access the internet.

The operational conditions of Bulb do not necessarily require intensive training, but rather an increased familiarity with the website and its features. Bulb is simplistic and does not contain any technical features that other word and information processors do not have. This increases the ability for students and professors to understand Bulb faster. Most consumers have prior knowledge with word processors and the basic functions such as copy and paste, formatting options such as bolding, italicizing, indenting and using bullet points, and inserting media. Bulb's select choice of formatting and design options help avoid user confusion as they are labeled with their function or the icons attached to the function are icons that have been used on other word processing systems, such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs. However, if there is still confusion regarding the use of Bulb, there are videos that are on YouTube that were created to help guide first-time Bulb users.

An economic assessment of Bulb has led our team to conclude that there is a low economic risk that comes with using the website in a classroom setting. The site itself does not require any monthly membership fee or fee in general. However, this is the case for the most basic features of Bulb. For students, Bulb is free. With the free
version of Bulb, students have the ability to create an unlimited amount of pages and collections. Each account has 2GB of space, allotted for images and videos. If instructors are pleased with the features that they receive on the free version of Bulb, an upgrade is not needed. However, if an instructor is looking for more features and space, they have the option to upgrade their account to Bulb Pro. This update is $49.95 per instructor for a year. The Bulb Pro update was created specifically for instructors as it has an increased amount of storage, instead of 2GB that is available on the free version, Bulb Pro allows users to have 12 GB of memory per account. Additionally, Bulb Pro offers a feature that allows the user to create up to five groups. These groups circumvent the need to post content that is available to all of the public; this is a solution for instructors/professors who do not feel comfortable making their materials available to the general public as they can create groups that only give their students and other personnel access to their content.

Other than an upgrade to Bulb Pro, there are no fees that occur from using Bulb. As previously mentioned before, there are no additional downloads that are needed to use the site. There are no hardware or software costs either as the website does not need any extra support from outside sources such as Java and other programs of that sort. The only cost that can be tied to the use of Bulb is access to the internet; however, once the student and professor (who does not need Bulb Pro) has access to the internet, there are no additional or hidden fees.

Regarding risk management, there are few issues that could potentially lead to the discouraged use of Bulb. Since Bulb is a website and it is internet-based, if the internet connection is not present, there is no way to access the website. If a student or
professor wants to access Bulb remotely, using handheld devices and smartphones, the option to use data is applicable, if there is no internet available. If Bulb were to go out of business, all materials on Bulb can simply be transferred to a Microsoft Word, Google Docs, or any other word processing software by using the copy and paste feature. This ensures that any material on Bulb will not be lost if the company were to go out of business. Bulb is meant to improve the systems that are currently in place for sharing material; it is not meant to be a replacement for D2L, but rather an outlet that improves D2L’s efficacy. If Bulb was no longer available, instructors and students can continue to use D2L, however it would be without the added ease that Bulb offers by placing all course materials on a single page or a collection of pages.

Bulb follows and conforms to the legal regulations that are placed at the University of Arizona and do not breach any of these regulations. FERPA (Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act) is not violated in any manner. The only information that is posted on Bulb for the public to access is the name on the account. There is no public access to any school records such as grades, schedule, and even the user’s email that was used to create the account is not visible to the public. ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) / Rehabilitation Act, Section 504/508 is also taken into consideration as this website is accessible to everyone. The design of the website is simple and user-friendly. Any visual aids that are given on the website, their sole purpose is to add aesthetic value; if a consumer does not have the ability to view these graphics or would prefer to avoid graphics, it would not hinder their experience on Bulb at all. Also, in terms of accessibility, there are no add-ins, downloads, or extra software needed to run and utilize the website.
Regarding the issue of privacy and intellectual property, Bulb has created a system that allows this to be protected. By providing your email to sign up for Bulb, this allows the consumer to receive notifications about specific bulbs that they have posted. An example notification that the consumer would receive is a notification that informs the creator of a Bulb if someone has asked or answered a question on their Bulbs. The only emails that are sent from Bulb are to inform the consumer about user-specific notifications or general emails that are sent in an attempt to better their Bulb experience. By submitting an email, the user is not subjecting themselves to unwanted and irrelevant spam mail. Publishing on a free account does not protect Bulbs completely. While it is listed in their “Terms and Conditions”, Bulb has written that stealing other user’s information is illegal. However, there are no measures taken to avoid this on the free version of Bulb. But this is a feature that is included in Bulb Pro. Bulb Pro allows users to publish their content so that only specific people have access to the Bulb as opposed to the general public. By including this feature, Bulb has made efforts to respect the intellectual property of their users and use methods to protect it as well.

**Next Steps/ Future Work**

Bring it to university level, talk about how it could become D2L, even though its very useful for certain classes, its very useful for other classes

In our interview with Professor McStotts, she seemed to agree that D2L does not always provide the best structure for lessons and notes. Because of Bulb’s linear and highly navigable nature, McStotts was convinced that other professors would gravitate towards it. The only issue she saw was the fifty dollar supplemental fee to ensure
privacy; something she was certain some professors would require so far as protecting their intellectual property. McStotts was enthusiastic about students creating accounts and making Bulb presentation on their own to present to the class. Because of its highly comprehensible nature, she does not think there will be a large issue in staff adoption of the website. Maybe a short faculty training session would make all professors more comfortable with the website. One thing to consider as far as faculty-wide implementation of Bulb, is that it might be more applicable for honors professors. Because Professor McStotts teaches an honors advanced writing class her small class size translates well so far as the discussion board on Bulb. Nevertheless, for professors in large classes, having one central location for all the information on a specific chapter might really simplify things for both the professor and students.

To recapitulate, we hope that professors at the University of Arizona might utilize Bulb to simplify the way in which they express their information to students. With its highly accessible nature and clear and concise formatting, Bulb would be an excellent location for notes, videos, and pictures. By placing all the aspects critical to a particular lecture or chapter in one arena, professors are limiting the amount of time that they have to spend creating presentations, and they can focus on central ideas. Not only that, but students no longer have to waste time jumping from tab to tab and wondering where a particular source or piece of information is located. In providing a discussion board, Bulb provides a nice sanction for discussion between students that might serve as a larger understanding for the professor as to how the class’ overall understanding of the material is going. Bulb would allow the instructional focus for classes at the University of Arizona to be the material. By placing all relevant information in one central
location, professors would no longer have to deal with frivolous emails surrounding the
location of particular documents. Overall, Bulb would serve to simplify the lives of both
professors and students. If implemented at the University of Arizona, we think Bulb
would be a medium of information sharing that not only professors could utilize, but
students may as well. Perhaps, after noting its user-friendly nature and more apt
formatting capabilities, students might create their own presentations for classes
through Bulb, and it will be utilized in more ways than one in promoting education at the
university.