Comparison of LMS, LCMS and CMS

A Learning Management System (LMS) is a software application or web-based technology for managing the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting, and delivery of training programs, continuing education, professional development, credentialing, online events, and eLearning programs (Digitec Interactive, 2015). An LMS then allows organizations to assign training to their clients, track their participation, and produce documentation of client training activity and results (Dubowy, 2013).

In contrast to an LMS, a Learning Content Management System (LCMS) is primarily used to create, store and organize e-learning content. An LCMS is a complementary solution to an LMS. Instructional designers use this software to develop, manage and publish training content. LCMS platforms allow single courses to be modified for individual learners (Dubowy, 2013). An LCMS system usually allows multiple collaborators to work together to create content that can then be published in a variety of formats. The key difference between an LMS and an LCMS is the target user. The LMS user is the learner, while the LCMS user is the learning content creator.

An LCMS typically provides a multi-user environment where administrators, instructors, and content managers can create, store, reuse, and manage learning objects from a central object repository. A learning object can be thought of as a small, self-contained re-usable unit of content that can be used to support learning. Some examples
of learning objects include Microsoft Word or PowerPoint files, PDF files, video, and audio (Digitec Interactive, 2015).

Content management systems (CMS) create the framework in which content is stored and displayed on a website. These systems manage various content forms, including files, images, electronic documents, audio files, and many more (Dubowy, 2013). CMS functions allow distributors to decide which content is displayed privately or publicly. Content can be easily tagged using metadata, which is best for searching and using content quickly and efficiently. Drupal and WordPress are popular content management systems used to create all kinds of websites. As opposed to a CMS, a learning CMS is specialized for the creation and management of learning content.

LMS vs CMS vs LCMS

Cite.Hr.com (2015) offers several pertinent points about the differences and similarities among LMS, LCMS and CMS. The focus of an LMS is to deliver online courses or training to learners, while managing students and keeping track of their progress and performance across all types of training activities. CMSs, on the other hand, are used primarily for online or blended learning, supporting the placement of course materials online, associating students with courses, tracking student performance, storing student submissions, and mediating communication between the students as well as their instructor. Some of the same functionalities can be seen within LMSs as well. However, the systemic nature of an LMS does not limit its functionality to that of a CMS. An LMS is not used to create course content (CiteHr.com, 2015).
By contrast, according to CiteHr.com, an LCMS is a related software technology that provides a multi-user environment where developers, authors, instructional designers, and subject matter experts may create, store, reuse, manage, and deliver digital educational technology content from a central object repository. LCMS focuses on the development, management and publishing of the content that will typically be delivered via an LMS. Users can both create and re-use content and reduce duplicated development efforts.

Rather than developing entire courses and adapting them to multiple audiences, an LCMS provides the ability for single course instances to be modified and republished for various audiences maintaining versions and history (CiteHr.com). The objects stored in the centralized repository can be made available to course developers and content experts throughout an organization for potential reuse and repurpose. This eliminates duplicate development efforts and allows for the rapid assembly of customized content (University of Illinois, 2012).

Illinois University continues to state that LCMSs provide tools for authoring and reusing or re-purposing content mutated learning objects, or MLOs, as well as virtual spaces for student interaction. For example, such as discussion forums, live chat rooms and live web-conferences. LCMS technology can either be used in tandem with an LMS, or as a standalone application for learning initiatives that require rapid development and distribution of learning content (University of Illinois, 2012).
History of LMS

The influence of Edward Thorndike who in 1912 said “If, by a miracle of mechanical ingenuity, a book could be so arranged that only to him who had done what was directed on page one would page two become visible, and so on, much that now requires personal instruction could be managed by print”, led Sidney Pressey twelve years later to develop the first teaching machine. Sidney Pressey’s device resembled a typewriter and could be used to practice drills and administer multiple choice quizzes (ProProfs, 2014).

The development of computerized teaching and learning tools continued steadily. In 1961, the PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automated Teaching Operations), the world’s first computer-assisted instruction program, was introduced by faculty at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It was the first computer-based teaching system and was host to the first on-line community (ProProfs, 2014).

According to ProProfs (2014), the first learning management system (LMS), FirstClass, was launched in 1990 by SoftArc and is still being used by the United Kingdom Open University to deliver courses. Since then Moodle, Canvas, CourseSites and several other LMSs have been created and used. SCORM (Shareable Content Object Reference Model), a set of standards for training technology, becomes the basis for many current Learning Management Systems.

History of LMS Interactive Timeline found here:
http://timeglider.com/t/47add96f85763656?min_zoom=1&max_zoom=100
Historical Context of LMS at University of Technology, Jamaica

Distance education idea began to be conceptualized at the University of Technology (UTech), Jamaica in the 1990’s, just about the time of the development and launch of the FirstClass LMS. Prior to the 1990’s, UTech operated on traditional modes of teaching and learning but was pushing ahead with computer courses in keeping with the technological thrust that guided its operations. UTech defines Distance Education as a formal teaching and learning activity which occurs when students and instructor are separated by geographic distance or by time, often supported by communications technology such as television, videotape, computers, Internet, or mail. Further, the university sought to define terms related to the use of LMS: All modules that are primarily (that is, with >70% of module hours) mediated by the web at a distance, supported by the selected LMS and have the majority of content, interactions
and assessments conducted online, are defined as Distance Education Modules; Modules which integrate the use of the selected LMS (30-50% of sessions) with face-to-face sessions, promote interaction online and make the selection of assessment modalities reflect the actual balance between online and face-to-face sessions, are identified as Blended Modules; Modules which promote use of online tools and online interaction with the Instructor, explore the use of the LMS (20-30% of sessions) to supplement face-to-face sessions and may include online components as part of formal assessment, are identified as Web Enhanced Modules; and modules which use the selected LMS (10-20% of sessions) primarily to distribute content and to supplement face-to-face sessions, and do not recognize online components in assessment, are identified as Web Assisted Modules.

The range of distance education synchronous and asynchronous modes may include the use of the internet, interactive television, digital video disks (DVDs), compact disk with read-only memory (CDROMs), videotapes, multi-media packages, computer-based instruction, audio and video conferencing and printed media.

Of special significance for UTech will be the increasing emphasis on incorporating Internet-based or online learning modes, where appropriate. The current thrust towards the adoption of an Online Learning Management System (LMS) to undergird the UTech Distance Learning Initiative is being driven by advances in Information and Communication Technologies.

Formal initiatives for Distance Learning have been ongoing at UTech since 1997. During this period, the development of the basic technology infrastructure included access to
Intranet facility, computer laboratories and multimedia software, while a multimedia firm (VILCOMM) was contracted to lead faculty training in courseware and media use. The first UTech distance learning programme to be delivered by print and CD-ROMs was facilitated by a formal agreement signed between UTech and the Commonwealth of Learning to pilot a special diploma for Technical and Vocational Education and Teaching in the Caribbean.

During the period 2001 – 2003, the focus was on developing policies, operating principles and the administrative structure for the approval and delivery of non-credit courses. In 2002, CEODL, with reference to ‘Open Learning’ as a means of reminding internal and external stakeholders of the underlying philosophy of increasing open access, choice and flexible learning opportunities.

In 2006, the Moodle Open Source Software System was adopted as the official UTech Online Learning Management System. Currently, there are over four (4) certificate courses and one hundred and thirty (130) modules, which can be used for blended delivery to remote learners.

In 2009, the UTech Distance Learning Policy Guidelines were approved as the framework for fifteen key operational areas.

Since then, several UTech distance learning initiatives have been coordinated on a project-basis to generate additional income for building institutional capacity through the delivery of short courses to remote learners in regional markets (Bahamas, St. Kitts & Nevis, Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines). This strategy has also facilitated the training of faculty members for online teaching, the development of short blended
learning courses for credit and the alignment of several central administrative and technical units within a supporting system for distance learners. The College of Health Sciences developed and launched its first fully online programme for learners in the Post Diploma in Pharmacy in 2013.
Reference


