



Organizing and Managing Content

Introduction

The *Blackboard Content System* allows users to store, share, and publish content within personal user folders, course folders and institution folders. This document explains how to organize and manage content in ways that are beneficial to them and to other users in the system.

Prerequisites

This document is intended for users who are using the *Blackboard Content System* to manage files. Before referencing this document, users should be familiar with the Content System interface and they should be able to complete basic tasks. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- adding, moving, and removing items
- searching for items

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Organize content in folders

Before adding any content to the *Blackboard Content System*, users should plan out how they will manage their content. This will allow them to organize content in a way which best meets their individual needs.

Files in the *Blackboard Content System* are organized in a tree structure of nested folders up to, and including, the content area level. This means that each folder may contain other subfolders and files. The term "items" refers to files and folders.

A folder stores both files and other folders. Folders are automatically available to the user who added the folder but must be shared if other users are to view the folder and its contents. It is important to remember that all folders are contained within other folders up to the root (/) folder. Root folders are folders in which all other folders are placed. Content areas, such as Users, Courses, Institution, and Library, are simply folders stored under the root folder.

NOTE: The system does not allow subfolders with the same name in a single parent folder. For example, two folders named Group Projects may not be created in the top-level of the username folder. The system also does not allow files with the same name to exist in a folder.

Private content space and Public content space

Creating separate folders for personal content (private space) and folders that are available to other users (public space) is very helpful. This method allows the user to have certain folders available only to them, where they can store personal content. For example, one personal folder may contain papers and projects that are in progress, while another contains professional content that is not ready to be shared, such as resumes and cover letters for jobs. Additional permissions for these personal folders are not granted to anyone else.

When a document is ready to be shared, it may be copied or moved to a public folder. For example, if an Instructor is working on a course document he or she can create the draft in a personal folder, and then move it to a shared folder when it is complete. The shared folder is shared with all users enrolled in the class (public space that is set to be available to only course members), and allows for collaboration.

Creating a private folder

A private folder is created in the same way as other folders in the *Blackboard Content System*, through the **Add Folder** option. The permissions granted on the folder determine whether or not it is private. In the username folder, a private folder is a subfolder that is not shared with any other users. A user may create a subfolder in his or her username folder and not grant any other users permissions to it.

Creating a Public folder

Similar to private folders, public folders are created in the same way as other folders, using the **Add Folder** option. The permissions granted on a folder determine whether or not it becomes to multiple users and groups of users. Any user with Manage Permissions may share the item with a wider audience. In a username folder, a public folder may be created and shared with a group of users collaborating on a project.

Organize Folder Permissions

It is helpful if users organize folders in a way that allows them to manage permissions by folder, rather than by file. For example, create a folder that contains all files used in a group project. This way the entire folder may be shared with the group members, rather than trying to manage permissions on separate items stored in different folders.

Only Read permission should be added to a top-level folder, for example the username folder. Anytime a Permission is added or changed on the top-level folder, check any subfolders or files designated as Private and verify that additional permissions have not inadvertently been added that would expose protected information.

Sharing Folders

When adding folders and files to the *Blackboard Content System*, keep in mind which users and user lists the content will be shared with. Try to create folders in which all items are to be shared with the same users. When items shared with the same users are spread out among different folders, it may become very difficult to manage. For example, if the user plans on creating documents that will be applicable to all users at the institution, they should create a folder that will be shared with All System Users, then add the specific items to this folder.

Sharing files

Files are automatically available to the user that added the file but must be shared if other users are to view the item.

Files inherit permissions from the folder they reside in. This means that if a file is added to a folder that already has Read and Write permission for certain users or user lists, the those same users will also have Read and Write permission on the newly added file.

Overwrite Option on Folders

When modifying or adding permissions to a parent folder, the user has the option to force all files and subfolders to inherit these permissions. For example, if the Read and Write permissions are added to the folder, and an item within the folder has Read, Write, and Remove permissions, Remove permissions would be removed from the file. All subfolders and files within the parent folder would be granted Read and Write permissions.

If this option is not selected, the files and subfolders are automatically granted any additional permission given to the parent folder, but existing permissions are not removed. For example, if

Read, Write and Manage permissions are added to the folder, and an item within the folder has Read, Write, and Remove permissions, the permissions for the file would remain Read, Write and Remove, and Manage would be added.

After modifying permissions on a folder, the user may modify the permissions on an item, but these will be overwritten the next time permissions on the parent folder are modified. This is one reason storing items with the same purpose and audience in a single folder makes managing permissions much easier.

Tools for sharing and finding content

A number of tools are available to facilitate sharing content and searching for content that has been shared. These options are dependent on the level of the folder shared, for example granting permission on a top-level folder versus a subfolder. Remember that when a folder is shared, permissions are granted to all content in the folder.

Find Folder

The Find Folder option allows users to search for top-level folders they have permissions to, for example if another user has granted him or her Read permission on a username folder. When a user is granted permissions to a top-level folder, the Find Folder option allows the user to locate the folder and add it to his or her Content System menu, making it easy to access the folder on a regular basis.

Users may decide to share a top-level folder with another user, and then adjust the permissions on the content within, limiting the content this user may access. For example, grant the user Read permission on the username folder. Then open the folder and remove Read permission for the content this user should not view. The user may still use the Find Folder option, but they will only view specific content in the folder.

Search

Search allows users to locate all files and folders that have been shared with them. When a search is performed only those items to which a user has permissions will be returned. If permissions are granted on a nested folder (and not the top-level folder) the user may search for the folder and bookmark it; the Find Folder option may not be used on nested folders.

Go To Location

Go to Location allows users to go directly to a specific folder that has been shared with them in the *Blackboard Content System*. This time-saver allows users to enter the path to open a folder and Bookmark the location at the same time.

Bookmarks

Bookmarks enable quick access to frequently used content without having to navigate through several folders. Bookmarks can be organized into folders and subfolders as needed by the user. This tool is helpful when permissions are granted on a nested folder, since the Find Folder tool may not be used.

Workflow Activities

If a user is expected to take action or respond to an item, it is helpful to send a Workflow Activity with the item. When a Workflow Activity is created users are selected to share the item with and permissions are granted. An option may also be selected to send an email to these users stating that this item has been shared with them and that a Workflow Activity is attached to it.

Passes

Passes may be used to share a file with a user for a specific amount of time. This is especially useful for sharing files with users who do not have system accounts. When a pass is created, the user decides whether to grant Read or Read and Write permission to the file with the pass. When the time allotted for the pass is over, the user will no longer be able to access the file.

Portfolios

Portfolios allow users to collect and organize files into custom Web pages. These Portfolios can then be presented to individuals and groups of users. It is important that users consider the permissions granted to files that are linked to in a Portfolio. If another user has permissions (other than Read) to a file that is linked to a Portfolio, the file may be modified or removed, resulting in issues for the Portfolio users.

Organize the user folder

A user folder is created the first time a user enters the *Blackboard Content System*. The name of this folder is the same as the username. This area may be organized according to the individual's needs.

NOTE: The Administrator determines whether username folders are granted for all users or only users with certain roles.

Storing content

Users should organize their user folder so that personal files and shared files are easy to access and manage. The user folder is a good area to for storing documents that are in development and private files. This area may also be used as a working space for group collaboration. The following are some examples of folders which may be helpful to create:

- Private Folder – a working area where projects that are in progress are stored. This folder is not shared with any users.
- Group folders - group collaboration folders, shared with other group members, where projects may be worked on together.
- Private course material folders – if the user is an Instructor, a folder in this area may be used to store private course information, such as student grades.

Granting Permissions

Users should only grant Read permission on the top-level username folder. Granting additional permissions to this folder makes it very difficult to manage and organize the contents. If other users are granted Read permission to the top-level folder, don't forget to remove permissions for any subfolders or items that should remain private.

Additional Documentation

Additional Blackboard documents can be found on the Behind the Blackboard extranet. Use the following URL to access Behind the Blackboard:

<http://www.blackboard.com/products/services/support.htm>

A login is required to access Behind the Blackboard. Users may create their own login for roles other than Administrator. Administrators must receive their Behind the Blackboard login from their Blackboard Account Manager.

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