

Promotion and Tenure

Clearly, to the degree that information technology enhances the quality and productivity of one's scholarship, teaching, and administrative activities, it can contribute positively to performance and hence have an impact on rewards such as compensation, promotion, and in the university, tenure. Yet in many organizations—and particularly in universities—both the process and criteria used for evaluating performance and reaching decisions on promotion and tenure are based on long-standing and widely accepted traditions, e.g., peer assessment, scholarly publications, grantsmanship, graduate student supervision, and, at least to a modest degree, teaching. While it is important for junior faculty and research staff to keep pace with information technology in an effort to enhance and enrich their scholarship and teaching, they should also be pragmatic about the degree to which their personal efforts to utilize technology will be recognized in performance reviews.

The careers of many a junior researcher have run aground on the shoals of excessive time spent in developing information technology for the classroom or the laboratory. All too frequently promotion reviews fail to recognize or weight appropriately tasks such as software and hardware development. Publishing in on-line journals or through sophisticated websites is usually discounted in favor of traditional, peer-reviewed articles in well-established scholarly journals.

While we can encourage promotion and tenure reviews to be more inclusive in their evaluation of the performance of young scholars to include such efforts as developing and introducing information technology into research and teaching, we must be more conservative in our recommendations to junior faculty and staff. It is important to understand clearly the criteria used in making these important career decisions, and to plan and conduct one's efforts accordingly. An elegantly coded subroutine developed to solve a research problem or novel application of multimedia in the classroom will almost always go unappreciated or unnoticed by senior colleagues more accustomed to evaluating scholarly publications in peer-reviewed journals.