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Final Report: TV Arts Writing Multi Media Lecture Materials

Summary of Project

Our goal was to create a lecture demonstration presentation package in Keynote or PowerPoint to be used for classroom lectures for the TV Arts: Writing Class in the Television Department. This material would also be stored on the server in the TV Department Floor 7 so students could easily access this from a computer on the seventh floor, either to make up for missed class or to review what was covered in class.

The Team

Etta Worthington is a part-time faculty member of the Television Department, teaching TV Art: Writing and Writing for Television. She is a writer and filmmaker. She is an experienced editor with knowledge of FinalCut Pro, DVD Studio Pro, SoundTrack Pro, Photoshop, and PowerPoint.

Jennifer Civettini is a full-time staff member of the Television Department. Wearing many hats, she has worked as an Assistant Camera and an editor in the film industry as well as working at Apple Computer as a Systems Engineer in education. She understands the importance of merging technology into the curriculum for today's students. While at Apple she helped educators in doing just that by hosting training seminars in applications such as Keynote, iLife and the OS X operating system. The goal of these seminars were to help the teacher incorporate facets of these applications into their curriculum. This helped further engage and encourage their students in their learning. She is well trained in many creative media applications such as Final Cut Studio, iLife Suite and is currently learning Apple's digital recording application, Logic Studio.

Software

The software that best suited the needs of this project were Apple's Keynote application from the iWork suite, Apple Quicktime for the universal viewing of many media formats and Celtx, a free screenwriting application that allows for online storage and file sharing of screen writings and related files. In the past having the information put on DVD's using DVD Studio Pro made it very difficult to share with many at a time unless multiple discs were distributed. This was a time consuming aspect of the project as well as difficult when changes needed to be made on the DVD last minute. Using Celtx in conjunction with Quicktime Pro and Keynote made all of the project and writing files

available online as well offered a collaborative realm for multiple students at a time. Our goal was to have all of the curriculum files available for each student or group in a “virtual storage space” with all the necessary plug-in’s (Quicktime) and presentations available at home or school.

Creating the Teaching Materials

After the decision was made to use Keynote, the lectures were created in Keynote with media inserted at appropriate places. We successfully stored the first lecture on the Celtx site for the class but found that subsequent lectures could not be uploaded because of the size of the media. So we went back to the original plan, which is to store the lectures on the 7th floor server.

The final product is a series of lectures which are available in digital form that could be used by other teachers doing this class. We don’t believe at this time other teachers are wanting to use this but we believe this is a hurdle that might be overcome by more exposure to the product and some instruction as to how to modify things.

Actual experience

The actual experience of using this material in Keynote was quite successful. It was possible to skip around if need be, to go back to a previous lecture if desired, and to make last minute changes or additions to the lectures. It made teaching with these materials quite easy.

Also, using some of the features of Keynote, it was possible to give a sense of movement with still media, which made the presentation more interesting.

All of the students thought that Celtx, the screenwriting software, was easy to use and learn. The fact that the software was free was universally appreciated. Almost all of the students were unable to upload their scripts onto the class area in Celtx so did not share the scripts with each other that way.

It seemed permissions and user privileges on the Celtx servers could use a little more work. On an individual log in basis it worked well. It seemed to get a little more complicated when there was more than a couple people tied to the same project. The complications consisted of not being able to alter a file and at times not have any access to it at all.

In addition to this there were a number of minor problems with Celtx, including a spell check function that did not work well. Most frustrating to students was the fact that the final formatting in Celtx had to be done when one was online.

Quicktime made it very easy to view many different formats of media within the Celtx interface. A student or instructor could share the .mov, .mp3, .mp4 file with no problem

and it would open up rather well within the Celtx window to allow instant on viewing or hearing.

Assessment

Sixteen students (of a possible 22) completed a survey on the last day of class. Students reported that they did go and look at presentations that were stored on the server if they missed class, and a few of them went and looked over the presentations to review what had been covered. Most students, however, who did not miss class did not look at the presentations again.

All but two of the respondents felt like the Keynote presentations helped their understanding of screenwriting basics. All of the respondents said that the visual deconstruction of the films we evaluated was very helpful.

Most of the students said they would have preferred the presentations to have been made available on Oasis or Moodle.

An interesting element that came out of the survey we did was a strong interest in reducing the use of paper in the class. We do table reads of three scripts in the class. This involves each student making copies of the scripts for each person in the class. That would involve 3,920 pieces of paper per class, or approximately 8 reams of paper per class.

Teacher's Experience

Overall, I think the use of Celtx for this class was a success. I had much better experience with getting scripts that were correctly formatted than in the past when Final Draft was used.

I responded to many of the scripts digitally, making notes in the side comment boxes on Celtx. Although this took me a little longer in the beginning, I think it worked well. The one problem I did have was not then being able to view my comments when I evaluated a revised version of the script.

Ongoing:

It will be fairly easy to substitute new movies to discuss and change placement of materials in the Keynote presentations. We are pleased at the use of Celtx because it allowed no excuse for students to have formatted scripts incorrectly. I (Etta) was pleased at how it worked to respond on electronic files.

I need to figure out how to save these comments in a way that I can easily review them when I am grading script revisions. That may be simply a need to have a filing system for the script on my computer.

We don't know the answer to why the online sharing of the scripts was unwieldy and did not work and would like to try to solve that this next semester.

We also want to work towards finding the way to make this class much greener. We want this class ultimately to be paperless, and therefore a fairly green class. We would like all the table reads to be done from computers. This cannot be accomplished presently with how the classroom is configured, but we feel confident that there must be a solution that will work and will be cost effective for the college.

This was a good experience this past semester, and continued to move this class to a higher level of technology dependence and a lower level of paper usage.

What is most important educationally is that students were improving their skills at a better level on average than previous classes have. Why is that? Is it just the increased use of technology? Greater use of technology has helped refine the course and made the presentation of the material in the class easier for students to access and respond to.