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Developing Course Materials: Making Time

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Abstract
Digital technology offers educators the ability to produce materials that are interactive and technologically relevant to students. This paper addresses the issue of providing professors with opportunities to develop digital technologies designed to meet their individual teaching style. Sacred Heart University is used as an example of how time and professional expertise are provided resulting in personalized digital materials that effectively enhance instructional effectiveness. Selection criteria, budget, and examples of faculty projects are also provided.

Introduction
"What's holding back the digital curriculum? A lot of things: too few classroom computers, poorly conceived professional development, and a lack of time to research and plan–to name three big factors, according to a new report from the nonprofit Education Development Center (EDC)" (Brumfield, 2005). Paradigm shifts taking place regarding teaching methods at all levels of education also reinforce the need for greater understanding and implementation of new digital teaching materials (anonymous, May 21, 2007). In addition, the problem of how to create and use of these digital materials effectively has traditionally been an impediment to their creation. Simply stated, "How can we make it more efficient and cost effective to develop and share them across the university, where possible, without compromising individual or specialized needs" (Lamb, 2003).

In her article, "Digital Resources for Teaching and Discussion: Three Approaches C & IT in English" Dr. Christie Carson speaks to the issue of the academic concern regarding the development of digital teaching materials. She states, "Over the past year I have developed a stronger sense of the concerns which face academics who are interested in adding digital resources to their teaching. The general picture is lack of time, skills and support. What has become clear is that there is a great range of interest in and understanding of the use of digital technology across the discipline" (Carson, 2004). University faculties are constantly being challenged to not only keep up with technology but to become proficient with its use, especially in terms of incorporating it into their classroom teaching. Today's students are looking for delivery systems that mimic their use of technology, much of which is interactive. In conversations with students in my Principles of Marketing and Consumer Behavior and Motivation classes, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, I have been told on a regular basis that what they enjoy most in my classes is my use of technology. Not only showing supporting materials on VHS tapes and DVD's but that I even use video games to reinforce concepts such as product placement. Students comments verify this as seen in their written comments on their semester ending teacher evaluations.

In order to regularly provide faculty with a meaningful way to produce an artifact or project that can be successfully integrated into their teaching, the Innovative Teaching Coalition (ITC) at Sacred Heart University, now in its fourth year, provides an environment for learning and creating digital technologies that can be immediately incorporated in their classrooms. The ITC is jointly offered through the departments of Academic Computing, Media Studies, and Information Technology. The purpose of the Innovative Teaching Coalition is to provide faculty with an environment conducive to allowing them to create digital technology that can be immediately incorporated into their classrooms. This does not mean learning to use an overhead projector or VCR/ DVD player. Its focus is on taking the available technology and to work with to move their use of technology to a higher level of instructional proficiency. This faculty focused program has been offering grants for four years providing 80 full time faculty members with the opportunity to benefit from this program.

This five-day program, which runs from 9:30 to 3:30 Monday through Friday (lunch provided), includes seminars on the use and incorporation of technology in classrooms and personalized consultations with Instructional Technology staff assigned to each participant throughout the week providing them with technical assistance. Participants in the program are also tutored by other university faculty members who have themselves attended the seminar and have effectively integrated technology in various ways into their teaching. Each participant is required to:

- o consult with institute staff to identify training needs and develop a training schedule
- o attend all five days of the Institute
- o give a project presentation that outlines how they plan on integrating the technology tools learned
- o attend a follow-up meeting with Institute participants and staff so that participants can further develop the projects initiated in the institute. A limited amount of post-Institute support (training and consultation) will be available from the lead facilitators throughout the academic year.

Selected through a competitive process, faculty members submit their proposals in mid-March. Once accepted a stipend of $800.00 is awarded to each faculty member for their participation in the program.

Literature Review
I was unable to find any articles that dealt specifically with university sponsored workshops enabling faculty to create digital course materials. The literature search did reveal the following six articles dealing with using digital course materials. These included, the teaching of science and engineering, the roles of digital libraries in teaching and learning, using digital materials in history and social studies classrooms and using digital materials in the preparation of social studies teachers . Other articles included using digital materials in teaching oceanography and for teaching recognition skills. I was, however, unable to find any articles specifically dealing with workshops and/or institutes providing faculty with expertise, resources, and stipends to develop digital materials at university expense.

Criteria for Selection
The following criteria are used to evaluate the proposals and select participants:

- o Feasibility of project
- o Potential impact on student learning
- o Applicability of this use of technology in the department/college and other disciplines

Tenured and tenure-track faculty of the university are eligible to participate in the IIT. Consideration is given to faculty with various levels of technological skill and experience with instructional technology – from novice to expert - who have projects that require technological solutions.

Project Budget
Project Development and Instruction	$6,000
Faculty Stipends (10 @ &800)	$5,000
Materials	$500
Food	$500
Students assistants (5@350)	$1,750
	$16,750

The Summer Institute on Instructional Technology
The purpose of the Summer Institute on Instructional Technology is to allow selected faculty to focus on their teaching challenges and to brainstorm collaboratively with other faculty and students in order to determine more effective ways for their students to learn through the incorporation and use of digital technology. The institute provides 20 faculty members, each summer, with the opportunity to expand their understanding, comprehension, skills, and the experience necessary to enhance existing courses by allowing them to integrate more robust technology solutions within their existing curriculum. It also provides an opportunity for faculty

to develop web enhanced courses while introducing them to principles of information literacy and copyright policies. The IIT teaches effective methods for adopting multimedia within existing courses and teaches successful methods for facilitating online learning and on-line discussions. In addition, basic and advanced Blackboard skills are also addressed. The Summer Institute for Instructional Technology is committed to assisting faculty in the production of innovative teaching resources or projects for use during the academic year. Through collaboration with other faculty and technology specialists participants also share solutions and experiences from past and current projects in ways that benefit the University's larger teaching community. Participants also explore the relationship between pedagogy and technology as well as evaluating of the impact of technology-enhanced teaching in the classroom.

Marketing Project

The project described in this paper was related to the digitization of various slides, videos, and advertisements used in two undergraduate marketing classes; Principles of Marketing and Consumer Motivation and Behavior in 2005 and 2006 as well as two MBA classes; Leadership and Ethics and Marketing Management in 2005 and 2006. Through my participation in the Institute for Instructional Technology I was afforded the opportunity to create an interactive digital resource, including various still images and video files, that would make the integration of these materials easier to manage. The teaching of marketing, by its very nature, is visual especially from an advertising perspective. Marketing contains many opportunities for the inclusion of supporting materials and video presentations within the constraints of the traditional classroom. This traditionally meant that students would be shown overhead slides, PowerPoint presentations, and videos all from separate sources brought to specific classes. The question was how to gather and arrange the materials that I traditionally use in my classroom into one easy to access and easy to use source; in this case a single interactive DVD.

Solution

Although exciting conceptually, having access to various video files, both on VHS tapes and DVD, has in the past, presented problems related to the volume of flies available in various formats and the ability to access them all from one specific source. Availability of audio/visual equipment in the classroom is not an issue at Sacred Heart. Each classroom is equipped with a video projector and a podium containing a DVD/CD player, a VCR, desktop computer, and a laptop connection. In the past I would find myself wishing I could have all my personal files on one easily accessible source. It should be pointed out that the intent is not only to digitize files, both print and video, but to be able to access the most commonly used files and videos seamlessly from one source.

The actual digitization of the materials was completed during the weeklong ITC institute. As with all attendees, I was assigned an intern, in my case a senior media arts major who worked exclusively with me throughout the week to design and continually refine my project as it developed. Additionally, he provided me with insight into the best way to keep and maintain my student's attention through the use of the video we were producing (my intern had actually enrolled in my marketing principles class for the following fall semester). This DVD would not only be a storage device but a multi-media presentation both in content, its appearance and the manner in which the material would be presented. My desired outcome was to have a single DVD that would contain the following information:
  o several hundred images of magazine and newspaper advertisements some of which had been previously scanned and some of which were scanned during the course of the institute.
  o twenty commercials from various television programs representing various demographic groups.
  o Selections of programs from various television programs used throughout the course of the semester previously taped on VHS tape.
The creation of this digital file not only met but exceeded all my expectations. It provided me with a way to have my most commonly used videos and photo files all on one DVD enabling me access to them whenever I need to reinforce a specific point. No longer did I have to carry VCR tapes, DVD's and photo's from various magazines to my classes. In addition, I no longer had to worry about leaving a tape, disk, or photo in my office.

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Follow Up/Results
By incorporating both still and video images on one interactive disk the time spent on actual classroom instruction increased significantly. No longer was time wasted by inserting and removing tapes and disc's. The level of student engagement also improved dramatically due to the interactive nature of the DVD and its content. Students would comment on how "cool" it was that I was able to access a DVD that contained so much relevant information and graphics.

Next Step
The next step is gathering together the remaining 20 digital slideshows and incorporating them into the original DVD. This will add content and continue to provide me with instant access to nearly all of the files used in my classes. Examples: Innovative Teaching Coalition Projects

Example #1
This project is to develop a set of hypertext links (text and visual) to integrate secondary source information with the primary readings in the American Literature survey course. Students would be able to use the links to discover more about the historical background of a text. While reading Walden, for example, a student could link to a picture of Walden Pond, a map of Concord, and an excerpt from Lawrence Buell's The Environmental Imagination, a study of Thoreau's contribution to the creation of American culture. A discussion of sublime elements in American Transcendentalism would have links to influential British writers such as Edmund Burke and images of painters that represent the sublime. Since all English majors must take this course, the new technology module would affect a wide part of the Sacred Heart University student body. For many students, this is their first literature course, and their first introduction to placing the readings in a larger cultural/historical matrix; this project would allow them to see and understand this matrix better. The students would gain a more complete picture of the text and would be able to engage with complex literary criticism in a more sophisticated manner. By directing the student's secondary readings more we would diminish problems with poor research materials and plagiarism.

Example #2
This project involved the creation of a specific learning unit devoted to experimental design processes and formal lab reporting preparation. The project involved creating a learning unit that could easily be incorporated across multiple classes and lab sections through university Blackboard site. Two key benefits of the resulting learning units were increased consistency in approach, outcomes, and assessment of the assigned major assignments. This decreased frustration regarding the clarity of assignments on the part of both students and their instructors.

Example #3
Creation of an animated and interactive DVD used in teaching the basic skills of graphic design. Creation of this DVD provides students with an interactive resource that will relieves the instructor of having to continuously review subject matter and provides the student with both the opportunity and the responsibility for being in control of these design essentials.

Example #4
First, create or copy or link more digital elements to replace parts of my lecture. For example, instead of describing through speech the extent of global deforestation, offer a dynamic map. Second, develop an outline of my lesson plan which students could use to coordinate note-taking. And finally, to coordinate the digital displays, lesson outline, exercises, etc., in such a way that students are offered a fluid step-by-step tutorial on the subject for the day. The multimedia instruction/exercises should improve engagement. The outline of the lesson plan should make clear to students the overall structure and salient points of my instruction.

Sample comments from past participants:
  o "This week is dying and going to heaven. I have not been to anything so useful in many years – if ever. Everyone was wonderful."

o "I was very pleased with the quality of the workshop. Having three general activities – facilitator presentations of techniques and applications, sharing ideas with colleagues, and producing my own project – worked very well for me. The model for this workshop should be used for future workshops."

Conclusion
The purpose for the creation of the Summer Institute on Instructional Technology is to provide faculty with the time and resources necessary to produce digital materials that can be effectively incorporated into their classroom presentations. By this I mean materials that are both topic relevant and more importantly easily incorporated into classroom lectures. The institute is also committed to the promotion and sharing of collaborative development of resources of the highest quality (anonomous, May 31, 2007). These resources include the allocation of time needed to devote to the project, the institute is held the first two weeks of June on the University campus, access to personnel who are assigned to each participant and access to the technology necessary to create a final project, in most cases a DVD disc.

Enthusiasm of faculty members in the institute was clearly evident throughout the two weeks of the institute as evidenced by the comments cited above. Since all participants work in the same laboratory they are able to discuss their work with other participants as well as with their assigned technology expert. At the conclusion of the two weeks each participant presents their project to the entire institute. In addition, each participant was expected to share their project with the entire University at a special session held during the fall semester.

Participants have been overwhelmingly positive regarding their participation in the institute. Any faculty member who has a need for or an interest in creating digital course materials is provided with an opportunity to participate in the institute. As was the case with my project, I was able to incorporate files contained on VCR tapes, DVD's and from print media onto one disk enabling to me have easy assess to material most often used in my classroom. Just as important, the use of this digital file provided my students with an opportunity to view material in a manner that they were more comfortable with.

Notes
There is no Innovative Teaching Coalition web page, however specific information can be obtained by contacting Dr. David Demers in the Department of Instructional Technology at demersd@sacredheart.edu.

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