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Interface Literacy: Screencasts, GUIs, and Computer-Mediated Authorship

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Interface Literacy:
Screencasts, GUls, and Computer-Mediated Authorship

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New composition includes the literacy of print: it adds on to it and brings the notions of practice and activity and circulation and media and screen and networking to our conceptions of process. It will require a new expertise of us as it does of our students. And ultimately, new composition may require a new site for learning for all of us.

Yancey, 2004, p. 320
Graphical User Interface Literacy

(Turner, Sweany, and Husman, 2000)

- Operating System Literacy
- Internet Literacy
- Hypermedia Literacy
Hypermedia Literacy & Interface Literacy

- The ability to “identify available resources and use contextual cues” to navigate a program, as well as the ability to adapt to an unfamiliar program or website (Turner, Sweany, and Husman, 2000, p. 41).
Video Podcasts & Screencasts

- Students prefer video podcasts over print handouts (Copley, 2007)

- Video-based instruction yields gains in satisfaction, comprehension, and retention relative to text-based instruction (Choi & Johnson, 2007; Su, 2008)
Screencasts as Software/Interface Tutorials

- Screencasts are videos that capture user interaction on a computer screen to demonstrate GUI navigation
- A technically viable medium for video-based instruction widely used on the web
- Addition of voiceover to video makes screencasts practical as tutorials
Screencasts as Software or Interface Tutorials

- Apparently common in distance learning (EDUCAUSE, 2006)
- Emerging as part of information literacy instruction for libraries (Peterson, 2007; Kerns, 2007)
Course Context - Students

- 300-level English elective, Writing for Electronic Media
- Students primarily majoring in communication technology, a program with concentrations in digital video, computer graphics, and systems & applications
- Some English majors, as well as others
Course Context - Writing Projects & GUls

- **Projects**
  - Weekly weblog
  - Personal website & e-portfolio
  - Collaborative writing in a wiki

- **GUIs**
  - Blogger
  - Adobe Dreamweaver & Photoshop
  - Mediawiki
The Challenge: Balancing Software & Writing Instruction

- Some software instruction is necessary in a course about genres of electronic writing practiced in electronic media.
- Class time spent teaching a software tool is time not spent exploring such issues as blog writing style, elements of web authorship, or collaborative writing in a wiki.
The Screencasts

- Blogger
- Photoshop
- Mediawiki
- Dreamweaver
• Google/Blogger
  - Get a Google Account
  - Get a Blogger Blog & Post
  - Feed Your Blog Posts
  - Feed Subscriptions with Google Reader
  - Blogger Templates
  - Blogger Page Elements
  - Blogger Fonts & Colors
Adobe Photoshop

- Basic Header Graphic in Photoshop
- Faux Column Technique for CSS Layouts
- Create Navigation Buttons
- Mediawiki
  - Logging in to Mediawiki
  - Adding Links and Creating New Pages in Mediawiki
  - Styling Text in Mediawiki
• Adobe Dreamweaver

- Grabbing a Layout Template and Stylesheet
- Defining Your Site in Dreamweaver
- Quick Tour of the Dreamweaver Interface
- Create a New Page based on a Template
- Modify the Template 1 & 2
- Internal Links, External Links, Email Links
- Cascading Stylesheets Introduction
- Modifying Cascading Stylesheets 1, 2, & 3
- Crediting Sources with a Comment
- Border Designs in CSS
- Insert a Header Graphic & Link to Home
- Insert Rollover Navigation Buttons
Data Sources

- First-day survey on information technology and use
- Student access to screencasts via Google Analytics & Webalyzer
- Post-semester focus group discussion
Information Technology/Use Survey

- 8 of 11 students responded
- 4 women; 7 full time students
- All own laptop/desktop/both & have high-speed internet
- Actively engaged with IT for social purposes (texting, IM, social networking)
- 6 report that IT use improves learning and makes it more convenient
- Much less active with online authorship and course-based communication
Server Logs
Screencast Data Transfer

Data Transfer (in MB)

January: 14 MB
February: 150 MB
March: 268 MB
April: 309 MB
May: 314 MB
Server Logs

Very Wide Variation in Usage

- 4 students accounted for 92% of screencast downloads (3 students accounted for 75%)
- One student downloaded 40 files (210 MB) in March
- Another student downloaded 37 files (204 MB) over two logins in May
Focus Group
Audio-Visual GUI Aid

- Value of screencast is conjunction of GUI navigation video and voiceover with explanation.
- “I want to hear someone tell me, ‘This is what this does and this is where you put your information.’ I need to hear this or I am going to get lost.”
- Fast-forward, pause, and rewind become audio-visual reading strategies
Focus Group
Interface Literacy?

- Difficult to explore in focus group
- Personal interest is a factor in adaptability
- Building to complexity is important
  
  “When you started with Blogger and I got confident with that and you introduced something else, I was kind of motivated to learn...”
Challenges & Directions

- Production is time consuming given limited use
- Rethink measurement of Interface Literacy concept, perhaps through think-aloud protocol (Crowther, Keller, & Waddoups, 2004)
- Very small study
- Consider Just-in-Time Teaching (JiTT) framework in course context
References


