New Media, Technology, and Online Course Delivery: A Comparison of New Technologies for University Instructors

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New Media, Technology, and Online Course Delivery: A Comparison of New Technologies for University Instructors

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Higher education has been transformed by new media in recent years.

Whereas university instruction was primarily face-to-face just a decade ago, higher education’s emphasis on the use of new media and student willingness to adopt emerging media (e.g., Twitter) have made online instruction (e.g., the hybrid course) a curriculum staple.

Making sense of the onslaught of new media and their impact on education requires that one first distinguish certain terms.
Defining Key Terms

- **Traditional media** refers to long-established media where forms of print are delivered on a producer’s timetable.

- **New media** is media that has existed since the mid-1990s (e.g., blogs) and is produced and consumed on a consumer’s timetable.

- **New new media** is media that has existed since the early 2000s, is produced and consumed on the consumer’s timetable, and (media that) may be used to pass content to hundreds of millions of producers (Levinson, 2011).
Levinson asserts *new* new media have six distinctions:

1. The consumer is a producer (i.e., a reader has total control over content).
2. The producer is not influenced by a paycheck.
3. The producer is able to choose the medium that best fits his or her knowledge and skill set and/or desired outcome (e.g., from podcasting to blogging).
4. *New* new media are typically free (or inexpensive) to the consumer and to the producer.

5. *New* new media support each other and older media (e.g., a post on Youtube.com may be embedded on a blog which may then show up on MySpace).

6. *New* new media are supported by web search platforms (e.g., Google and Yahoo!) but are not dependent on them.
In contrast, *technology* is more than just media (Wright, 2008). *Technology* includes the pedagogy that guides the use of media; the teaching strategies driven by stated objectives and the desired outcomes. Technology involves a mix of experiences, activities, and tasks. *Technology* mingles collaboration with reflection.

According to Wright, *technology* is not the buffet where you pick and choose; it is the entire seven-course meal. You may not polish off every course; but you’d better get a good sample from each.
While new media has seemed the panacea for education’s ills, university instructors have found themselves wrestling with the challenges associated with technology.

These challenges require that instructors consider a wide variety of factors as they work to adopt media for online course delivery: technologies that seem daunting to most instructors.

These challenges merit a study to understand the wave of new media and how it may be used.
Research Questions

Based on a review of new media, learning community, and teaching pedagogy for online learning literature, three questions were generated for inquiry:

RQ1: Which technology works best for delivering course content online?

RQ2: Which technology can be quickly learned?

RQ3: Which technology can easily be managed over time (and still fulfill one’s research and service duties)?
Method

To answer these three questions, 9 (new) new media were tested to determine each one's uniqueness and potential usability.

These technologies include: Wikis, Final Cut Pro, Audition, Facebook, Twitter, Camtasia, Wimba, Second Life, and GoToMeeting.

Six university instructors/researchers used each technology, noted each one’s technology's unique features, and evaluated each technology on a variety of factors (e.g., ease to learn and cost).
Technology 1: Wikis

- Defined: A Wiki is an online collaborative space where multiple people can work together on a single project.

- Unique features: A Wiki may be used to publish new content direct to the Web, to edit existing content, or “revert” back to past content if necessary.

- Evaluation: Wikis are specifically suitable for projects where students work together, especially with a short deadline.
Technology 2: Final Cut Pro

Defined: Final Cut Pro is an editing software that expedites the conversion of video-taped lectures to viewable online files.

Unique Features: With limited training, an instructor can master Final Cut Pro. Its drag-and-drop features simplify the production process.

Evaluation: While Final Cut Pro is a state-of-the-art editing technology that produces professional quality videos, it is an Apple-exclusive product.
Technology 3: Audition

- Defined: Audition is an audio production tool for recording and enhancing podcasts, lectures, and voiceovers.

- Unique Features: Audition is designed for PC and Macs. Audition may be used for audio-for-video editing tasks including voiceovers and narrations.

- Evaluation: Audition is a powerful, free tool that takes some time to master. Audition is ideal for producing high-quality audio for online course delivery.
Technology 4: *Second Life*

- **Defined:** *Second Life* is a virtual world where residents create avatars who navigate a three-dimensional online environment.

- **Unique Features:** *Second Life* offers a user the ability to incorporate numerous other new media (e.g., video, text-based conversation) in a synchronous virtual context.

- **Evaluation:** While current trends indicate that 3-D online domains will be increasingly used in the future, it is unclear *how* much they will be used.
Technology 5: Facebook (& MySpace)

- Defined: Facebook and MySpace are the two primary social media. Social media help users connect to people anywhere in the world.

- Unique Features: Facebook design features are relatively intuitive. In contrast, MySpace offers the user greater variety of self-presentation.

- Evaluation: Use of Facebook and MySpace typically increases instructor accessibility and instructor/student connectivity outside the classroom. As a result, the formal roles of instructor and student may be blurred.
Technology 6: Twitter

- Defined: Twitter is a *new* new media micro-blog where users post short messages (140 characters or less) on a frequent basis.

- Unique Features: Teachers and students can tweet (exclusively) text messages or they can embed content from other media (e.g., YouTube).

- Evaluation: An instructor may use Twitter for specific projects or for the entirety of a class.
Technology 7: **Camtasia**

- **Defined:** Camtasia is a technology used for creating audio and video recordings.

- **Unique Features:** Camtasia is ideal for anyone who lectures with PowerPoint, because it easily allows one to transfer classroom content to an electronic format.

- **Evaluation:** Like Audition, Camtasia is an invaluable tool for delivering content online; however, it takes time to master. (The free, open source version of Camtasia is available at Camstudio.org.)
Technology 8: Wimba

- Defined: Wimba is a multi-functional learning management system that can be used to deliver electronic content synchronously.

- Unique Features: Wimba offers a location where PowerPoint slides, web pages, and a white board space can all be viewed online. It also includes audio and video capability both for the presenter and for students.

- Evaluation: With little training, Wimba’s many tools can be mastered in little time.
Technology 9: GoToMeeting

- **Defined:** GoToMeeting is a meeting software program that may be used for online classes.

- **Unique Features:** GoToMeeting is useful for lecture-style classes when an instructor wishes to talk while showing students PowerPoint presentations, videos, or various websites. The controls afford the instructor various drawing and highlighting presentation tools.

- **Evaluation:** The learning curve for using GoToMeeting is fairly short. It can easily be adapted to university course purposes.
The GoToMeeting Attendee View

Meet Now

Organizer: GoToWebinar Training Team | Presenter: GoToWebinar Training Team

Audio: Use your microphone and speakers (VoIP) or call in using your telephone.

United States: +1 484 589 1020
Access Code: 751-875-281
Audio PIN: 102

Audio Mode: Use Telephone
Audio PIN: 46

Chat

Meet Now
Meeting ID: 847-686-874

GoToMeeting®
Conclusion

- Wimba, GoToMeeting and Second Life
  - synchronous online class meetings
  - limited use for classes where students can’t all get together at the same time

- Camtasia, Final Cut Pro and Audition
  - useful preparing materials to post on a website for an online class – podcasts, etc.

- Facebook, Twitter and Wikis
  - allow for communication beyond email
  - create a class community
## Results and Discussion

### Usability of the software (1-5, 1 being easy, 5 being need formal training)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Software</th>
<th>Usability</th>
<th>Helps students to achieve course goals (obviously this criterion is broad)</th>
<th>Helps build community in the classroom</th>
<th>Can be integrated into LMS (all can be used/launched within learning management systems)</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wikis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Cut Pro</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audition</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>$99</td>
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What questions do you have?

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