SUMMARIES OF SESSIONS ATTENDED

LAB 808 Teaching WordPress within a Writing Curriculum

WordPress is a free, downloadable application which offers a variety of themes and layouts for bloggers. This workshop was designed with the teacher in mind. How can you use blogging with students? WordPress allows teachers to create course blogs where students can contribute content and respond to the instructor’s posts. Students also have the ability to create their own blogs. The teacher can then link blogs into a community. Such an application facilitates informal learning, student pride, and group cooperation.

APPLICATION: I already use blogs in my class, so this is a familiar idea to me. I have students create their own blogs, and I then create a blog community of students who visit and respond to each other on their blogs.

CS 620 Camtasia Relay: Lecture Capture for the Masses

This session showed participants how to use Camtasia to record lectures and make them available online for student viewing. Avoid the “What did I miss” student question. Avoid having to “re-teach” a course for one student! Have lectures available online! Camtasia is a quick and easy way to capture in video anything on your computer screen.

APPLICATION: Camtasia is all new to me. I have applied this valuable resource to create an online lecture for my INT 1471 project.

Opening Keynote General Session – Luis von Ahn

Keynote speaker Luis von Ahn, Assistant Professor of Carnegie Mellon University, discussed some of his own creations, including the spam-bot fighting CAPTCHA and reCAPTCHA programs, online security checks that help reduce spam-bot generated spam and help prove the humanity and individuality of online users. The counterpunches of spammers includes sweatshops that pay low wages to individuals for filling out masses of reCAPTCHA forms and how one response is to extend reCAPTCHA words into entire sentences in order to make it even more difficult and time-consuming to fill out.

Von Ahn briefly discussed how the New York Times is using technology to finish completely archiving issues dating back to 1980.
He also discussed how images are categorized for search engine ease of use. In order to solve the problem of image searchability, von Ahn developed the ESP Game in order to generate appropriate tags by random users so that a list of search terms is developed for any given image.

His next planned project is to create a translation program for Wikipedia.

APPLICATION: I am looking into ways to integrate reCAPTCHA into my school literary magazine’s submission page in order to reduce the number of spam submissions we receive.

LAB 823 Camtasia Studio: Best Practices in Education

This session provided overviews and examples of how teachers around the country have integrated Camtasia generated videos into their courses. With Camtasia, you can create videos of PowerPoint projects, Word and PDF documents, screen windows, and anything else that you can open and manipulate on a computer. With a tablet PC or Bamboo, you can record your own handwritten diagrams and commentary on documents such as students papers or mathematics graphs.

One instructor put his discussion of the course syllabus online as a video and then used the first day of class to actually begin teaching. Another instructor created an inverted classroom. In other words, he recorded his lectures and assigned their viewing as homework. He then used the class time for lab tasks and group work; doing so provided more time for class activities. It also allowed him to produce consistent, high quality lectures. Yet another instructor used Camtasia to record his grading and commenting of student essays. With a tablet PC and Camtasia, he narrated his comments as he made marks on the paper. The student was then sent this recorded video. This process apparently saved the professor time since he no longer needed to write out all of his comments.

APPLICATION: I have applied the inverted classroom approach to the lesson I have created for INT 1471.

LAB 831 Snagit: What You Need to Know About Screen Capture and Editing

Snagit is a TechSmith designed screen capture software that “allows you to copy anything you see off your PC screen edit and enhance your screenshots, and share them by print, e-mail, files, and more” (Event Program 29). Snagit works well with other programs such as PowerPoint, Word, and Excel and can be seamlessly integrated into the toolbars of such programs. This session provided hands-on instruction on the use of the program. Participants were led through the process of capturing and manipulating the screen image of a calculator.

APPLICATION: This is a quick and easy tool I can use to help me manipulate images and diagrams for online and in any future PowerPoint style presentations for on-site classes.

LAB 839 Jing: Simple, Quick and Free Visual Classroom Communications

Jing is a simplified version of Camtasia and Snagit combined. You can dock Jing into the side of your computer so that it is easily accessible when you need it. With Jing, you can record instant screen videos and snag and manipulate—at a rudimentary level—images from your screen or the Internet. Instructors can use Jing to quickly record course content and updates for students. The basic model is free, which is
fantastic if your college hasn’t invested in the TechSmith software package. Participants were led through the capture and manipulation of images and videos in this session.

APPLICATION: This seems like a quick and easy version of Camtasia best suited to small note-style information I would like to make available quickly to my students. The drawback is that you cannot edit, nor can you provide captions for hearing impaired students.

LAB 847 Getting Started with Camtasia Studio

One of my goals at TechEd 2009 was to become adept at the use of Camtasia, so I attended any and all Camtasia labs and sessions. In this sessions, participants practices adding audio to their videos through headsets. Presenters suggested the use of USB headsets in order to reduce white noise in recordings and to produce higher quality sound files. They also shared some valuable quick keys—F9 for Record Start/Pause and F10 for Record Stop.

APPLICATION: I took all the Camtasia sessions I could get because I knew I would be applying this program in my lesson plan. I have incorporated these techniques into the lesson created for my INT 1471 project.

Keynote General Session – Robert Bramucci

Scheduled keynote speaker John Lester from Second Life was forced to cancel last minute due to a family emergency, so upbeat blues guitar playing Dr. Robert Bramucci, Vice Chancellor of Technology and Learning Services from South Orange County Community College District gave this keynote address.

Bramucci began with an overview of some new technologies on the horizon such as cell phone projectors, keyboardless laser keyboards, augmented reality goggles, and 3D the requires no special glasses.

Bramucci then discussed how far we have come in merging technology into education, debunking several myths:

1) Myth 1 is that there is no future for online education. Ha! Soon, half of higher education will be online!
2) Myth 2 is that distance ed. is a fad. But distance ed. has been around for over 150 years and has recently seen a great spike in use due to recent advances in technology.
3) Myth 3 is that distance ed. is inferior to traditional models, but success rates and student responses counter this argument.
4) Myth 4 is that distance ed. is dehumanizing. No. It is not dehumanizing in and of itself. Rather, distance ed. is a tool. Moreover, its focus recently in the online world has been about bringing people together, creating virtual communities of sharing and support and communication and social networking. This is a far cry from dehumanization. Bramucci’s point was that we need to debunk these myths and accept the benefits of online distance education.

Finally, Bramucci discussed the differences in online and face to face deliveries. Frequently, when a new technology develops, humans interpret and understand that new technology by referencing the old technology it is replacing. (e.g: early cars looked a lot like horse drawn carriages. Why? Because people were familiar with carriages.) It is time to free ourselves from the old model and embrace the new format
for what it is, a new model freed from the confines of the old. We should look to the new learner types, created by gaming and cutting-edge technology—to help us shape our online environments in order to better reach 21st Century learners.

APPLICATION: Limited. However, this speech was useful in that it provided an overview of technologies of the future. What new technology will we be able to harness in the future? How will these technologies change my courses? Bramucci confirmed my feelings about my online courses—that they are a different breed of course from my onsite courses and that they are valid communities of learners.

**CS 661 PowerCounterPoint: How Working Memory and PowerPoint Can Work Together**

This session focused on ways to create successful lessons through PowerPoint presentations. The presenter provided several *don’t*’s for PowerPoint presentations.

1) Avoid tiny text.
2) Don’t turn your back on the audience in order to read what’s on the screen.
3) Don’t put text up on the screen and expect your audience to listen to you as you attempt to explain something else. Automaticity means that the text will trump you *every time!* Multitasking is a myth, so don’t expect your audience to perform it during your presentation. Instead, if you must put text on the screen, don’t battle it. Read silently along with your audience and then move on to your explanation. And when should you use text? Use when terminology is hard to imagine or comprehend. Seeing the word may help.
4) Avoid the blown-up and pixilated graphic. It will simply make your presentation look amateurish.
5) Avoid “the squeeze,” or squishing or lengthening pictures to unnatural lengths.
6) Avoid 0% eye contact. Also avoid 100% eye contact. 50% eye contact is optimal and allows you to connect with your audience without making them nervous.
7) Don’t overdo gesturing. Be tasteful.
8) Avoid the poor contrast between text and background. What looks cool at home may be difficult to read on the big screen.
9) Don’t use flashy transitions. If you choose a transition, choose a simple one and keep using it so the audience will get used to it.
10) Avoid *motion overload,* or several distracting moving images. Movement attracts individuals, and if movement distracts from your message or if there are competing movements on the screen, your message will get lost. 10) Avoid gratuitous graphics. Keep it simple and direct.
11) Avoid the *one spot* stance. Use proximity and distance from the screen to your advantage. If you would like your audience to now look at and listen to you, move away from the screen. If you would like them to look at the screen, move toward the screen. If you would like them to read or pay closer attention, you can actually turn and look at the screen yourself.

APPLICATION: This session provided me with the theory and motivation necessary to begin creating PowerPoint presentations for my classes. I have applied these ideas to my INT 1471 project.

**LAB 852 Benefits and Uses of Wacom Tablets (jumped over from other session)**

Wacom provided an overview of some powerful applications of their digital writing tablets. Users can use a Bamboo or other Wacom writing tablet in tandem with Photoshop and other graphics programs in order
to create impressive images for classroom use. Wacom tablets can *learn* a user’s handwriting and thus be used as a primary input device.

APPLICATION: This technology would be useful when used in tandem with Camtasia. I could use a pen to highlight, draw, and mark-up texts. I could narrate and record these mark-up sessions in Camtasia and provide to my students for viewing and reviewing—a valuable lecturing tool!

**RT 302 Focused Discussion Groups That Engage the Online Learner (till next session)**

This lunch roundtable in the exhibit hall discussed ways to engage students in online forums and to encourage *substantive* forum posts from students. Pointed and specific questions, forums set to Q/A which require a student to post before seeing the posts of others, and requirements specified clearly in course content can encourage thoughtful postings.

APPLICATION: I already put into use much of what was discussed here. I use weekly online forums in order to facilitate discussions with and between students about course content. I use the Moodle interface. I also use blogger.com blogs to facilitate ideas and discussions.

**VT 405 Web-based Learning: Embrace Technology, Empower Yourself**

This session sounded interesting but turned out to be an Atomic Learning sales pitch. Atomic learning is an online resource which provides how-to’s to many software packages. The presenter took us into the actual lists of tips pages. The catalog of information is impressively huge and looks useful. However, why pay for this service when there are so many free resources on the Internet, like iTune’s U’s TechEase, that provide similar information. The benefits do not seem to outweigh the cost.

APPLICATION: I could conceivably make use of these tutorial pages with my students when needed. However, the cost is restrictive. Other free resources are adequate.

**CS 673 Tag: You’ve Got It**

University of South Florida’s Gordon Worley provided an overview of *tagging* online. Tagging is a bottom up approach to cataloguing information and helps people to connect and socialize with others interested in the same topics. When tagging, you use words that describe an online resource. Tags are searchable by you and by others.

Tagging, according to Worley, is a *folksonomy* rather than a *taxonomy*. In other words, tagging is a grass roots, bottom up approach to cataloguing that is forgiving and flexible rather than, like the Dewey Decimal System, top down, unforgiving and fairly inflexible.

*Deli*icious is an online tagging resource community. Delicious users tag information constantly and create tag lists on all manner of subjects. Other users can then search subjects and tags in order to find needed information. Delicious brings like-minded people together and, like FaceBook and Twitter, creates communities.

Other online resources which employ tagging are Tag Galaxy, Cool Iris, and Newzingo.
APPLICATION: This idea seems to be more of a benefit to me and my research and knowledge of various subjects. I could teach students about tagging and provide lessons in which they are asked to tag and catalog sites. I’m just not sure how this activity could be applied to composition courses yet. It might be better suited to literature courses. I could have students create profiles and communities at Delicious and then research and tag resources together, creating a class web of tagged material. That might just work! Planning needed.

LAB 872 Enhancing Your Courses with Camtasia

This session was a “hands-on session focusing on the use of Camtasia software” (53). I attended this session in order to further my skills with this product as I plan to use it in my courses.

APPLICATION: I have applied to my lesson plan created for my INT 1471 project.

CS 695 Authentic Learning in a Second Life

The session focused on the online virtual reality site, Second Life, as a valuable education tool which can be used to create a “powerful and authentic” learning experience for students (57).

Second Life is an expansive Internet based virtual world that is one hundred percent user created. It is inherently social and has its own functioning monetary economy with an official exchange rate. The presenter suggested ways to create an authentic learning experience through Second Life by capitalizing on its strengths.

Here are a few key considerations as you explore SL for the classroom:

1) Avoid the classic pitfall of using technology as a “novelty act” to try to interest your students. The goal is “authentic” learning, not a turnkey way to relate to hip students. SL is far too complicated for this purpose in any case.

2) Consider how you will assess the activity. Avoid just letting students lose in SL. How will you assess the assignment? What, exactly, will you have them do in second life, and how will you assess it? What will it teach them?

There are benefits to Second Life as a teaching resource:

1) SL allows you to form groups and break off into sub groups.
2) It allows chatting.
3) There is a low entry barrier for creativity. In other words, it is very easy to create objects such as structures and environments.
4) The symbol interface will be familiar with younger students.
5) There is physicality to the world. Students can interact with a virtual world, can visit historic places or exotic new places.
6) SL allows for collaborative building.
7) SL excels in lessons with a special element. For instance, students can visit 1876 Paris for a history lesson.
8) SL allows for risky or impossible behavior. For instance, a student can stand next to a lion, jump of the Eifel Tower or travel through space. SL allows for new learning situations impossible in the real world.

However, there are drawbacks to SL as a learning tool:

1) High speed Internet and lots of memory are required.
2) A graphics card is a must.
3) The learning curve is steep, so requiring it of all students is unfair.
4) It is an open ended world, similar to life. If a student takes a wrong turn, he/she can end up in a strip club!
5) Institutions are concerned about liability, harassment, inappropriate content, privacy, and accessibility for student with learning disabilities

The presenter suggested use of SL as an elective assignment and also suggested presenting material in alternative text and video format for those who elect not to use SL.

To get started, a faculty member should create a profile and play around in SL. Getting a handle on the ins and outs of the environment and its do’s and don’t’s is a must. The learning curve, again, is high, so an instructor must be comfortable before integrating into a course.

APPLICATION: I could create a Second Life community of learners. I could lecture and discuss in SL. I could create an interactive environment. For instance, I could create a kind of scavenger hunt where students seek out and identify the various elements of an expository essay. I could have them meet and discuss a book with its author that I could play. This would all take lots of work, and there is a huge learning curve.

CS 706 Beyond the Music: Educational Uses for iTunes U

This session explored iTunes as a source for educational content. iTunes U provides “educational content” created by universities and other institutions “for all subject areas” (59). Normally, we think of iTunes as a place to purchase video and music content, a one-stop media shopping experience. But an entire section of iTunes is devoted to educational endeavors. iTunes U audio includes lectures, stories, news reports, and comedy. Video and text files are also downloadable.

Institutions can become contributors to content to iTunes U, but if an instructor’s institution is not enrolled in the program, instructors can still upload their own material in regular iTunes and make it available to students.

The benefit of making material available on iTunes is that students can download and read, watch, or listen to the material on the go via an iPod. Why not make material available in such a great mobile format!

APPLICATION: I am planning on providing my INT 1471 project to students via iTunes, in addition to other course content. I still haven’t figured out exactly how to add content yet. Learning curve here.

CS 716 Practices to Foster Informal Learning
This session explored the benefits of informal learning and offered suggestions for encouraging informal learning in education.

Informal learning is unscheduled. It occurs between people getting together. It is conversation and team playing. It is impromptu. It is not a means to an end but rather a means with its own end or no end. Informal learning means there is no evaluation. When evaluation like letter grades is introduced, the tendency is for the evaluation to become the goal rather than the learning.

Types of IL include observing, trial and error, conversation, reflecting, choosing communities with similar interests, and choosing the learning environment.

An essential strength of IL is that it creates a calling rather than a career. It is self generated. People do IL because they are driven by an internal desire to do so rather than by any external motivating factor.

The panel of presenters offered suggestions for facilitating IL in courses:

1) Having students create and contribute to blogs.
2) Online forums

This session offered a unique perspective to learning. If an instructor can create spaces that allow students to relax and engage with each other without the fear and apprehension that comes with evaluation, then IL can happen in class.

APPLICATION: This session provided interesting and useful theory behind practices that I already incorporate into my courses. Now that I have a term for this idea (informal learning), I can be more aware of as I plan my courses for the future. For instance, I can make sure that each course provides non-graded areas such as special chat rooms in order to facilitate such learning.

CS 726 Teaching Creative Writing in an Online Format

The presenter of this session shared online content one can use in order to create an online learning environment for a creative writing course. What I found most interesting was the idea of an open final project that allow the student to choose from several possibilities:

1) a collection of poems
2) a collection of stories
3) the first few chapters of a novel
4) a one act play
5) a screenplay

How Devry University teachers teach all of these mediums of writing successfully in eight weeks is beyond me. It seemed to be beyond the presenter and creator of the course as well!

APPLICATION: I took away from this presentation the idea of freedom of choice, which may encourage a sense of informal learning mentioned in the previous session discussed above. I may include this type of freedom in my upcoming online creative writing class in Fall 2009.

Closing Keynote General Session – Hall Davidson
Hall Davidson of the Discovery Educator Network presented “Revenge of the Digital Immigrants—Teaching with Media Technologies.” Davidson’s message was that we digital immigrants (those of us not born into the era of online technology) must enter into and utilize the technologies that younger digital natives use and connect with naturally. It is difficult to become fluent in a foreign tongue, but it is necessary in order to communicate effectively to those who speak the language.

Davidson suggested that the “short attention span” that we normally consider inferior to the longer attention spans of the past is not actually inferior but different, and if we create lessons that work with this style of learning, we will be connecting with our students in new and effective ways.

Davidson provided many exciting examples of quick, free, and easy technologies that we can harness, such as polleverywhere.com instant polls that allow students to use their cell phones in order to vote, Chromakey, where users can place video images of themselves into unique environments, and cell phone movies quickly uploaded and accessible via Youtube. Many technologies such as these can actually be used by the students themselves, so why not assign projects that use these new and fresh mediums. Why not let student actually do rather than merely see.

If we accept technology rather than fight it, we will find new communication avenues that will allow us to reach our students. Why tell students, “Turn your cell phones and your iPods off! Your methods of communication aren’t wanted inside the hallowed walls of this institution!” when you can say, “Now turn your cell phones and your iPods on! We are going to use them for a fun project today!” This is the ultimate “revenge” of the digital immigrant—to co-opt their media and use it to advantage in the classroom.

APPLICATION: I want to run cell phone insta-polling in my classes! What a great idea! In addition, I hope to include course content on iTunes so that students take lectures on the go. The short attention span idea is something I should be more aware of. Providing shorter multiple format lessons to cater to the new learner will help me to connect my content more successfully with my digital native students. For instance, I might begin with a quick cell phone poll, lecture in class for five minutes, show an under-five minute PowerPoint, move on to set of movie clips, and then finally to an in-class writing activity. Such a rapid-fire, multiple measure approach will most likely be more successful that a traditional stand and lecture approach or a long PowerPoint presentation.
Works Cited