

Retrospective Paper MEDT 7468

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Introduction

Let me introduce you to my little friend, Multimedia. Multimedia is my helper in the classroom. He helps me create presentations that engage the students. He transfers knowledge often without the students realizing what is happening. He helps me by being able to repeat himself without my having to. Multimedia is a great asset to have in the classroom.

Like most employees, multimedia must be managed. If left alone, he is not very productive. He just sits there all day long. He needs direction. That's part of my job, to give direction to my little friend. With proper guidance and the right mix of ingredients, multimedia can work wonders.

Question 1 Significant Assignments

The two assignments that I feel are significant to using multimedia in the classroom are #1 "My Life" and #4 "How-to." Both of these projects required the use of multiple technologies such as photographs, video, audio and clip art. These assignments both encouraged writing, planning and problem solving.

Project #1 "My Life" was interesting to me in that I have never really introduced myself to my students. Of course I've told them my name and what I teach but I have never really told them much about my background. I've always let that information come out during informal discussions. This project helped me to realize that I should prepare an introduction about who I am both professionally and personally.

Project #4 "How-to" was similar to projects that I already use in my classroom. I teach multiple courses during the same class period. In order to accomplish this task, I have placed all assignments, worksheets, test and due dates on a website. The students come into the classroom and go right to work. I have several videos and podcast prepared that describe and/or demonstrate how an assignment is to be completed. Due to the school's network security I cannot play *PowerPoint* presentations through the internet. Network storage space is limited and difficult for the students to access presentations there also. My solution has been to prepare Flash videos that are allowed to stream through the internet.

Flash is the tool that works for me when I need a presentation that a student can access as an individual. I do have and use several *PowerPoint* presentations in my classes where I instruct the class as a large group. The ability to combine text, graphics, video and audio together is a great benefit to the teacher. This multimedia experience when combined with the actual hands-on completion of a task reaches a majority of the learning styles and helps to reinforce the student's knowledge and accomplishments.

Question 2 Engagement in Online Discussions

I believe that Discussions 1 -3 should have lead up to Issue B "Good Multimedia, Bad Multimedia. Contrast, repetition, alignment, proximity, color and type are the basic tools of good multimedia. There are other items to be considered, but these are the foundations of good graphic design. My contribution to Issue B was that first and foremost, the designer needs to consider the purpose of the presentation and the intended audience before designing the presentation. In a multimedia presentation about the Battle of Gettysburg, the basic facts and content will be similar, but the graphic design and interaction will be different for elementary and secondary students.

The same criteria carried forward into Issue D: Designing Interactivity. Basic graphic design rules should carry the day. The type and amount of interactivity will depend on the purpose and audience. Consistent colors and repetition of navigation is very important. If the viewer has to look for navigation aids, then they quickly become bored with the presentation and loose interest. Animations should be used sparingly and only with a purpose. Combining animation with text has a tendency to overload the learner and the focus shifts from the content to the animation.

Discussion #1: Contrast and Repetition was an important beginning point in that it gives the designer the background for their presentation. By saying background, I mean the literal background for the template. Contrasting colors should work in harmony together. The colors chosen for navigation aids should stand out from the presentation background but not be glaring. The text should be crisp and easy to read. Any sidebars, headers or footers should contrast greatly with the background so as to set them apart. This in and of itself will keep the viewer focused on the body of the presentation.

Question 3 Positive Values

There are certain rules and guidelines to follow when preparing multimedia presentations. I believe that the most important rule is to properly identify your audience. Everything else in the production follows the target. The class has had several online discussions about good design techniques and everyone has read the same information. What surprised me the most was the variety of presentations in which the authors thought was good design. The biggest lesson I have reinforced in myself this semester has been knowing when to offer constructive criticism and when to remain silent.

Question 4 Knowledge and Skills

Of all the topics covered in this course, the most beneficial to me was that of good design principles. Our presentations should demonstrate our abilities as a professional. Good multimedia should engage to the audience, not offend them with poor color choices or badly timed transitions.

The teacher preparatory program for vocational educators I attended provided very strong instruction in the use of *PowerPoint*. As a result of that, I have consistently used proper backgrounds, colors, fonts and text sizes in my presentations. In the past I have never utilized audio files in my *PowerPoint* presentations. This addition has been the new skill for me this semester.

Question 5 Challenges and Support

Honestly, I find *PowerPoint* to be a boring tool to use. I pretty much limit its use in my classroom to presentations where I will be speaking and can advance the slides as I need. It is a powerful tool for what it was designed for, but trying to force a single tool into every situation is counter-productive. If I want a multimedia presentation that will run continuously without interaction, then I prefer video. It is much easier to create and edit than *PowerPoint*. If I want an interactive presentation that the user chooses which topics to access, then I prefer a website. With HTML, I have much more control over the entire process and can create and/or edit small pieces at a time instead of the entire presentation.

Probably my biggest use of *PowerPoint* in the classroom is for teaching Architectural Drawing. I have assembled several photographs of houses in various stages of completion. I show photographs of elevations and we have a class discussion about styles, designs, roofs, building materials, etc. I can show photographs of foundations and then show a graphic image of how the foundation is drawn. This is a great tool for bringing varied information together for the students to see.

My biggest challenge of the semester has been adding audio files to the presentation. The timing of the file and the adjoining transitions must be carefully planned and tested. I learned to allow one to two seconds before and after the speaking when editing the audio file and then to allow an additional half to one second after the file before transitioning.

Question 6 Lessons Learned as a Learner

I believe that I have taken this class out of sequence. Several of the topics relating to multimedia and design technique have been covered in other classes. The projects have afforded me the opportunity to practice these skills. I have learned a few new items relating to the mechanics of *PowerPoint* such as Smart shapes and hyperlinks.

Question 7 Advice to Future Students

“Take the course in sequence!”

I believe that the projects were valid assignments each building upon the previous one. Starting off with simple slide transitions and audio/graphics is good. The students may know how to use the basic tools in *PowerPoint* but they need to think about good design techniques. I think that good design is better than *PowerPoint* magic. If the design is bad, then no amount of dazzle will rescue the presentation.

Question 8 Surprises, Take Aways and AHA Experiences

Project #5 “e-Book” was the most fun for me. I chose to create a story using photographs from the play “*Anne of Green Gables.*” My daughters and I would sit and look at the photos I had chosen and come up with a story. We started with one theme and it just kept getting sillier. Since so many of the characters had hats, we developed a story about the hats. This led to the current storyline about a town-wide hat competition. The story has many issues relevant to children such as excitement, rivalry, inadequacy and acceptance. Then we finished up with a deep, moral truth “Hats are a lot like people, it’s what they do that is important.” Involving my children in this project was great fun and they love the finished product. Most especially since their photographs are in it.

Question 9 Wishes and Realities

If I were to teach MEDT 7468 next year I would introduce other multimedia formats to the course. *PowerPoint* is good for what it is designed for. I believe that a basic introduction to Flash would be beneficial. This would show students other tools that they can utilize in their classrooms.

Conclusion

As a result of the assignments from MEDT 7468 I have tried several new aspects of multimedia. Some I have found to be useful in my classroom, while others just don't seem to fit. *PowerPoint* is a great tool to use, but it's not the only multimedia tool available. Like a master craftsman, I must match the right tool to the job at hand. Multimedia is a great helper to have around the classroom. He can be entertaining and educational at the same time. Or he can be boring and obtrusive. My job as the teacher is to guide my little friend into being the very best that he can be.