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Curricular Review: Supporting the Move to Digital Tools for Audio and Video Production 1

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Digital Tools and Curriculum at Butler University

Curricular Review: Supporting the Move to Digital Tools for Audio and Video Production 1

Christine Buck
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There is little doubt that the age of digital technology has arrived. From using CD ROM software in the classroom to researching on the internet, selecting and using authorware to craft assignments, to teaching non linear editing of audio and video at the desktop, mass communication academic units are coming to grips with the emerging technologies.

The merging of the electronic media with computer run production technologies will force some changes in the curriculum as we integrate the new digital media as tools for the design, creation and production of audio and video communication.

The integration of digital technology into the existing curricula does not necessarily change the mission of the department or the language used in course descriptions. Our goal in the production areas of our discipline is, as it always was, to teach students how to use video and audio tools to communicate ideas. This sentiment is echoed by professionals as they move into the digital world. At the Artists Rights Digital Technology

Symposium held in 1996 Gil Cates expressed it well by saying "I think people who make films, television, CD-ROMs, etc., they are the balladeers of the 21st century. They're really storytellers."

If our mission to educate storytellers and communicators has not changed,what is the real impact of digital technology on production courses in our curriculum?

The impact is felt both in curricular design and in decisions about resource allocation. With expansion into digital environments, new technologies create new opportunities for our student communicators. This has an impact on what and how we teach.

Additionally, there is the issue of how we best allocate scarce resources to the acquisition of these new, often expensive, technologies without jeopardizing the overall goals of the entire curriculum.

These are all good questions. Ones that mass communication educators will have to face squarely in this decade.

Our academic unit is trying to deal with these issues very directly. We have just completed an examination of the current curriculum to see how well we are meeting our stated educational goals and how faithfully we are following our departmental mission. As in any curricular examination, we sought to examine our educational priorities and to make changes and commit financial resources that support our curricular goals.

This examination will result in a draft of a short range and long range plan to be implemented that will serve the needs of the students, the department and

the University as we move into our digital future.

At the departmental level an examination of curricular change is usually driven by the department head. He or she may be responding to external sources, as in accreditation review, or from some internal university or departmental objectives for curricular examination.

In our case, the department chair charged a committee of faculty to look at the entire departmental curriculum because he perceived that the curriculum might be somewhat out of date. The last serious curricular review had been undertaken in 1990.

The committee engaged in research, aided by internet searching, to see what other institutions in our region were offering in their curriculum and to see what nationally known institutions in our field were doing within their curriculum.

We are in the process of getting this overall curricular revision through the appropriate college and university committees. But to comment on those aspects that directly relate to the integration of new technologies, I will outline the specific curricular adaptations and digital equipment acquisitions that we have undertaken during the last four years.

In 1992-1993, after attending the National Association of Broadcasters and Broadcast Education Association conventions, the facilities manager, faculty, and department chair agreed that we needed to bring our audio production suites into the nonlinear age. Having resisted the urge to jump into these technologies before a standard became

clearer, the department settled on purchasing a Roland nonlinear editing system for one of our audio production rooms. This system is a stand alone box that provides students multi-track layering capabilities in the digital non-tape based environment. On the curricular side, our basic Audio Production course continued to focus primarily on acquisition of good sound and analog recording and editing. Toward the end of the semester, students are introduced to the Roland technology and complete one assignment in the digital environment. The Roland was more fully integrated into the Advanced Audio production course as a tool for layering sounds and editing. However this acquisition did not substantially impact our existing courses or our curriculum.

In the Summer of 1995, again after attending the conventions, a decision was made to upgrade a second audio production room from analog recording and editing to digital capability. In this case, having researched products on the market, we purchased a Spectral Prismamusic digital audio workstation. The addition of this second workstation gave us sufficient resources for students that allowed us to expand the audio production curriculum. In 1995, we added a Recording Arts track to our curriculum. This track included several new courses and we updated existing production course

descriptions. We added a 200 level course in the Theories and Techniques of Sound Recording, a 300 level course in Multi-track recording and a second 300 level course in recording Audio for Video. (See the Appendix for an outline of the Recording Arts Track and the overall curricular revisions.)

To support these courses we hired an adjunct professional to teach these three courses. His experience working for a local video and audio production house on Prismamusic and other work stations made him an excellent choice for teaching this sequence. Additionally, both the Roland and the Spectral are being used in production houses in our city and we have access to other professionals with expertise we can tap. Having served our primary needs of updating the curriculum on the audio side, we began to look at acquiring additional digital nonlinear editing capability for video production.

Also in 1995, the college installed a Prototype Teaching Multimedia Facility (PTMF-Lab) on campus. This lab contains 15 work stations. Adobe Premiere editing software and Adobe After Effects are installed in the computers. This summer we will explore how to get university funds earmarked for technology to make these work stations functional for editing video and audio. We need to add tape machines and get memory upgrades in order to make these machines efficient for our students to use. Once we have the upgrades we need, a basic nonlinear editing chapter can be included in either Video Production One or Video Production 2.

In 1996, we purchased an Avid Media Composer to achieve the goal of providing our video production track students capabilities similar to the high-end audio solutions we had already purchased and supported in the curriculum.

In our current curriculum, we have added one new 300 level course to the video production sequence called Nonlinear editing. In this case the course will be taught by a full-time faculty member.

Our department is very small. The full time production position we currently have is filled by a faculty member with expertise primarily in the area of video

Jordan College of Fine Arts
B. S. In Telecommunication Arts
Summary of Courses

Course Nr	Hours	Title
TC 103	3	Radio and Television Performance
TC 104	3	Electronic News Writing
TC 105	3	Introduction to Telecommunications
TC 120	1+1+1	Audio Lab
TC 130	2	Television lab (Remote Production)
TC 201	3	Audio Production
TC 202	3	Video Production 1
TC 203	3	Electronic Journalism
TC 205	3	Electronic Field Production
TC 210	3	Electronic Media Advertising, Sales and Promotion
TC 225	2	Technological Foundations
TC 252	3	Theories and Techniques of sound Recording
TC 265	3	Electronic
TC 302	3	Video Production 2
TC 304	3	Advanced Television news
TC 310	3	Television Directing
TC 312	3	Writing for Eleectronic Media
TC315	3	Audience Research anbd Measurement
TC 316	3	Non-Linear Editing
TC 320	1+1+1	Audio Lab (Sales, Research, Audience Development)
TC 330	2	Television Lab (Production)
TC 331	2	Television Lab (Operations)
TC 332	1+1+1	TV Lab (Sales, Research, Audience Development)
TC 333	3	Performance Lab
TC 352	3	Multi-Track Recording
TC 353	3	Audio for Film and Video
TC 404	3	Electronic News Ethics
TC 431	3	Electronic Media Managment
TC 432	3	Law and regulation of Electronic Media
TC 452	3	Legal Issues in Entertainment and Recording

production. This explains why a full time faculty member is teaching the video course while adjunct faculty is currently teaching the audio sequence. We are currently engaged in a faculty search and hope to bring in a full-time faculty member with audio experience who can also teach in the core areas of our curriculum.

So with curricular changes in place and approved at the University level , our short term planning is finished.   In the long term, our hope is to be in a new, well equipped, building on campus in the next five years. . The President of the University has made this new building a priority.In the building plan, approximately 2 million dollars is allocated for equipment (soft costs). At that time I fully expect us to get very heavily into new technologies which may not even exist yet. This 2 million dollars, however, must outfit a TV station in addition to meeting the need of the academic curriculum. Fortunately, the TV station is run out of our department so dual use of equipment is possible to meet both station needs and academic needs.

In conclusion, there is an impact on the production curriculum with the integration of new technologies. Our department has tried to manage the impact on the curriculum through updating course descriptions to reflect the use of new technologies and engaging in curricular overhauls when necessary. All of this change can be managed by thoughtful review of the curriculum and careful attention to serving the departmental mission and meeting the academic needs of students.

Advertising and New Technology

Advertising on the World Wide Web

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Susquehanna University

The World Wide Web (WWW) has become the new frontier for businesses attempting to reach customers through advertising (Wagner, 1997). It is difficult now to find any, even marginally popular, sites that do not have a multi-color advertising banner blinking across the top of the browser window.

The use of these banners is sparking academic discussion and research, yet how the advertising works and how users are tracked is still a relatively misunderstood process.

The purpose of this paper is to offer definitions and explanation of this unprecedented form of virtual advertising.

Tracking Viewers
When you enter a WWW site, CNN for instance, the CNN server knows your computer is there. It has to in order to send the files that display on your browser window as "cnn.com."

The WWW is constructed so files, such as images or text documents, move from one client server to another. In order for that transfer of files to occur, each server must know where the other is located. This movement of files is done through a series of protocols, referred to as Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) (Hedrick, 1987).   The process is accomplished in three steps. Once you

click on a link to cnn.com, the steps begin.   Your computer asks if the cnn.com server is there. The cnn.com server replies that it is. Your computer then requests files.   The files are transferred and the page begins to display in your browser window.   Now the cnn.com server has a record of your computer's location in order to send the files. A server's record of allocation of files are kept in a directory, usually named "Logs," on that server's hard drive.

At the end of a day, it would be possible for the cnn.com Webmaster to use a program to sort out the Log directory and create a report of what pages were accessed most, what image files were requested most, what servers requested the most information, and how many pages, on average, did viewers move through before leaving the site. This would be very important information to an advertiser who has paid for a banner to be placed on a site's pages.

However, all that can be gathered from the Log directory is that another server asked for files. The actual computer requesting the files is still a mystery.

Cookies
The use of a cookie file is a common way to answer what computer is actually using a site.   Cookies themselves are small text files that servers "hand out" to web browsers (Kington, 1997). If you have surfed into a site of any size, such as ESPN Sportszone, or the Netscape Home Page, then a Cookie file has probably already been placed in your browser's "cache"

directory. The file itself is a simple text document that can contain just about any information the supplier wants to offer. The reason a server would place a Cookie in a browser's cache is so that a specific computer can be "tagged" and more easily tracked during future visits.

From an advertising point of view, this type of individual information can be quite valuable.   The use of Cookies permits records to be made of how many times a specific computer entered a site. Other types of Cookies, nicknamed "Shopping Carts," can keep track of, and immediately report, individual purchases (Wilson, 1996). Cookies can also be useful in managing registration information. Once a user has registered a computer to enter a server, a specific Cookie file can be placed in that computer's browser cache to enable future entrance into the site without going through another registration process.

From a user's point of view, Cookies can seem quite intrusive. A person might not enjoy their computer being individually tracked. Software companies and Internet servers are responding by offering programs that make you "anonymous" when surfing by adding false information to your Cookie or allowing you to surf through a second server so another computer is seen as the machine using the site when, in fact, your computer is the final destination of the files (Anonymizer, 1997).   Other programs simply destroy or prohibit the placement of Cookie files.

Advertising
Advertising on the WWW is done mainly through the use of advertising