Panel on: The Problems and Prospects of Teaching in the Digital Age

Abstract

These four panelists tackle some of the thorny issues raised by teaching in the digital age. Topics include: preventing misinformation; the effects of digital technology on storytelling; developing appropriate e-learning tools; and unequal access to educational technologies.

Proposed Panelists

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Topic: "Team Travails: First Aid for Misinformation"

Summary: As we develop more online and ITV courses in higher education, we lose the face-to-face interaction of the classroom. Within the confines of our four walls, we sought to establish a sense of community and effective communication among students and between students and teachers. Now, our walls have become the software, for example, WebCT or Blackboard. Using the new technology, how do we, as educators, create a supportive learning environment, free from misunderstanding and miscommunication? When sending an email or posting to a discussion board, voice, tone, context, and culture are variables that should be carefully considered. Both sender and receiver bring these elements to the communication situation. Unlike face-to-face communication where nonverbal communication carries the majority of the message, in electronic communication, the message, itself, carries the burden of clear communication. Therefore, syntax, grammar, and semantics each convey information about the message. In addition, the recipient can ascribe values, behaviors, and personality to the sender through his/her in written words.

This paper explores a student-centered paradigm and offers suggestions for minimizing communication apprehension and misinformation in online distribution. We use examples from our team collaboratives in English and Speech Communication to prescribe approaches for effective communication transactions.

Michael Marsden, Eastern Kentucky University

Topic: The Effects of Digital Technologies on Storytelling"

Summary: I have been a long time student and scholar of the popular storytelling process. My work over the past three decades has included popular fiction, popular film, television programming and popular rituals, each of which has contributed significantly to the increasing complexity of the popular storytelling process across media. I am intrigued by the ways in which the audience participates in the creative storytelling process and how the oral tradition blends with the literary tradition in the production of "best selling" stories in whatever medium. For example, it is clear that popular writers who produce best selling fiction are closer to the oral tradition than to the literary tradition.

The attractiveness of their work rests in part with their closeness to the oral storytelling traditions. Best selling authors are often good talk show guests for good reason! Their exchanges with the public, whether by means of radio and television guest appearances or by means of book signings and personal communications, become part of the storytelling process.

Enter the computer into the storytelling process and we have new ways of communicating with and about storytellers. The very nature of the storytelling process is being modified, if not substantively changed, by the inclusion of computer technology into the existing complexities of contemporary storytelling. Authors have web sites, invite responses from readers, survey readers, interact with audiences in electronically immediate and personal ways, create texts that have been electronically edited, and in some cases made immediately available to the public without the gatekeeping function of traditional publishing practices. In summary, popular storytelling has added a new level of computerized complexity to the process.

The question which remains is whether or not the essential storytelling process, which is comprised of the many interrelationships and interconnections the storyteller has with the story and with the audience, has been substantially altered.

Tim Walters, Zayed University

Topic: "Developing e-Learning Tools"

Summary: We are developing multimedia learning tools appropriate to best use of the technology and for the culture.

The first volume in a new multimedia e-learning series entitled Living Books™ was Media Writing One, which teaches universally basic reporting skills. Media Writing One was created to fill the need for culturally-sensitive, technologically-appropriate, pedagogically-sound and locally-developed course materials for use by the College of Communication and Media Sciences in undergraduate courses at Zayed University.

Media Writing One has lessons, assignments, and learning materials much like a standard text. Unlike a standard textbook text, these e-learning materials were designed to:

·   enhance the learning experience for today's students

·   provide self-paced instructional tools for individual students

·   make best use of available convergent technology: text, audio, still image and video

·   create useful exercises for a technologically "convergent classroom."

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Topic: "Personally Authenticating the Digital Divide"

Summary: Is technology equalizing or polarizing this world? The authors answer this question by personally authenticating the dramatic state of the digital divide via their own experience. The intention is to clinch the point that digital divide is not distant and impersonal, a concern of someone else, but close, real, and very personal. The authors' multi-regional and multi-national experiences put them in a poised position to share about and reflect upon the issue of the digital divide.