CIT Monthly News and Events
February 5, 2009

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Upcoming CIT events and workshops: February 2009

2/10/2009  Teaching IDEAS: “Responding Efficiently and Effectively to Student Writing”
2/12/2009  Effective Use of Student Groups in Class
2/19/2009  Link Lunch – monthly CIT hosted lunch for faculty teaching in the Link
2/19/2009  Managing Long Documents MS Word
2/24/2009  Tablet PC Discussion Group
2/25/2009  Creative uses for blogs, podcasts and wikis in language learning
2/27/2009  Teaching IDEAS: “Developing an Electronic Teaching Portfolio”

To learn more or to register for any workshop, visit http://cit.duke.edu/events/calendar.do.

Faculty may request a custom workshop for their department on any instructional technology topic by emailing CIT.

SmARThistory – A teaching aide for art history

The site SmARThistory is a unique, growing resource that aims to be an enhancement, or even a replacement, for the traditional art history textbook. It allows users to browse styles, artists, and themes in an easy to use interactive timeline. Clicking on a work will bring up short podcasts lectures, flickr feeds and links to other resources related to the work.
The site was founded by Beth Harris and Steven Zucker of the Fashion Institute of Technology at the State University of New York. The work is an outgrowth of multimedia materials and blogs they were already creating for their courses.

"For years we have been dissatisfied with the large expensive art history textbook. We found that they were difficult for many students, contained too many images, and just were not particularly engaging. In addition, we had found the web resources developed by publishers to be woefully uncreative. We had developed quite a bit of content for our online Western art history courses and we had also created many podcasts, and a few screencasts for our smARThistory blog. So, it finally occurred to us, why not use the personal voice that we use when we teach online, along with the multimedia we had already created for our blog and for our courses, to create a more engaging "web-book" that could be used in conjunction with art history survey courses. We are also committed to joining the growing number of teachers who make their content freely available on the web."

The New Media Consortium's 2009 Horizon Report, which looks at trends in uses of technology in teaching in higher education, cited smARTHistory as an example of the "Personal Web", a set of technologies that allow faculty, students and experts to easily build rich multimedia websites, e-books, and other resources.

Online education seminar: Award-winning tools, tips and technology for online instruction

In collaboration with the School of Nursing, Pratt School of Engineering and Nicholas School of the Environment, CIT is offering Duke faculty access to an online seminar from STARLINK focused on successful online teaching strategies and demos that award-winning instructors have found to work well. The 60-minute long seminar will be available for two weeks, February 9 – February 23, 2009, 24/7 via the Internet at http://www.starlinktraining.org.

Examples of strategies to be presented include:

- Ideas for going outside the restrictions of CMS
- Tools for student-centered instruction
- Ideas for linking classes worldwide
- Creating content that is not just content driven
- Social networking/community building mechanisms
- Rubrics for good student assignments

To obtain the seminar access login, email cit@duke.edu.

Can't make it to the seminar between February 9–23? Don't worry! You can check out a DVD copy of the seminar from CIT after February 23 – just email us.
Keep up with the Blackboard buzz!

Have you wondered how you or your support staff can keep informed about changes to Blackboard including scheduled outages, updates, bugs, news and training opportunities? You are in luck! Sign up for the bb-alerts email group.

Q: How can I subscribe to the bb-alerts email group?

A: Method 1: go to https://lists.duke.edu/sympa/info/bb-alerts and log in with your NetID and password, and then click on “subscribe” option within the List Operations on the left menu.

Method 2: send an email to sympa@duke.edu and in the subject line write SUBSCRIBE bb-alerts. Should you have any questions or concerns, contact Neal Caidin (neal.caidin@duke.edu) as the list owner.

To explore and discover Blackboard features, see the Blackboard support website. If you need a tutorial for Blackboard, request an office visit and we will come to you.

Visualizing Pharmacology

Duke students Marcel Yang and David McMullen (pictured) produced a three dimensional visualization for teaching pharmacology as an independent study project with Rochelle Schwartz-Bloom and Rachael Brady. They have tested the impact of their visualization on student learning in Duke’s Immersive Virtual Environment (DiVE) as well as on computer screens. They are currently preparing their visualization to be entered in the NSF Science and Engineering Visualization Challenge.

This project is partially supported by a Center for Instructional Technology Visualization Grant.

See their presentation at the Visualization Forum.

Read more at the Duke Research Blog on Science Education Goes Virtual.

Getting Personal (part 1): When blogs are more than blogs

Every year the New Media Consortium (NMC) and the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI) release a
Every year the New Media Consortium (NMC) and the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI) release a report on the emerging trends and technologies that may in some way shape higher education in the near future. Centers like ours often use this report as a guide when considering future strategies for adopting new technologies and planning for providing services for technologies that might be coming down the road. The full report, called the Horizon Report, is available as a PDF, or completely online. Tim Bounds also has an excellent summary and overview of the report over at the Duke Student Affairs blog.

In a series of posts called ‘Getting Personal,’ I’m going to attempt to explore and unpack one of the six core concepts in the report – the ‘Personal Web.’ The Horizon Report introduces this idea as follows:

“Fifteen years after the first commercial web pages began to appear, the amount of content available on the web is staggering. Sifting through the sheer volume of material — good or bad, useful or otherwise — is a daunting task. It is even difficult to keep track of the media posted by a single person, or by oneself. On the other hand, adding to the mix is easier than ever before, thanks to easy-to-use publishing tools for every type and size of media. To cope with the problem, computer users are assembling collections of tools, widgets, and services that make it easy to develop and organize dynamic online content. Armed with tools for tagging, aggregating, updating, and keeping track of content, today’s learners create and navigate a web that is increasingly tailored to their own needs and interests: this is the personal web.” (Horizon Report)

For this first post, I’m specifically interested in addressing these “easy-to-use publishing tools.” Perhaps this is the best example of what a ‘blog’ really is. For many of us, we tend to think of blogs as a web-based journaling device, or maybe as a way to keep an online diary of the daily adventures of our cat. Others have come to recognize the power of easy self-publishing, and we now, as a culture, are much more aware of folks who are ‘bloggers.’ No doubt the term ‘blogger’ carries several political and cultural connotations in recent years that has perhaps cast even some negative views on the idea of a blog itself. But the blog, the tool itself, is really a powerful tool for bringing text, photos, video and other multimedia together into a form that feels more presentable and ‘published’ than simply the sum of those parts alone.

In a recent presentation at the annual EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative conference, Jim Groom (UMW), Alan Levine (NMC), and Cole Camplese (PSU) explored the idea that the blog could be much more than just “a blog.” All three gentlemen co-created a blog just for the presentation, and gave each piece of their presentation via the same blog (in lieu of yet another PowerPoint): Eli2009.wordpress.com.

Alan Levine spoke mostly about the concept of ‘blogging.’ Put simply, he suggests that blogging is the act of web publishing, that “it is more than software.” Alan’s presentation also pointed to a recent NMC survey about blogs and blogging at member universities that reflects an even split between universities that support and host a blogging service (as UMW and PSU do...more on that following), those that refer users to external services (such as Blogger or Wordpress), and those that rely on a similar tool within their own CMS (in Duke’s case, we have a ‘blog’ tool available within Blackboard, which is a nice, easy to use tool, but only scratches the surface of this concept of using a blog as a ‘personal web’).
Cole Camplese discussed Penn State’s adoption of the popular MoveableType blogging platform. In the Penn State model, each student has their own blog that lives behind the university’s single sign on authentication. What this does is not just allow students to journal or write reflections, but it creates a space wherein students can choose to have an “open publishing platform – not just a blog service.” Students end up using their blogs as “powerful personal content management environments,” basically publishing everything they do (personal and academic) to their blogs. If students need to provide an artifact (say a paper they’ve recently written for a course) they can create a ‘tag’ for that course, and let the department or instructor pull a feed of that particular set of info from their blog. Camplese explains:

“Stacks of papers can become a thing of the past as students move their content into integrated online spaces that are fully searchable and belong to them. Some departments have worked to identify and clearly articulate the program outcomes so as students create work (evidence) they tag it with the program outcome statement so it is easily aggregated together.” (Click here for more of Cole’s presentation)

Jim Groom (see his guest blog post for CIT here) discussed UMW’s use of the Wordpress platform for a variety of purposes beyond simple blogging, including using blogs for lab notebooks, audio databases, art exhibits, etc. For more examples see 10 Ways to use UMW Blogs. His main focus in the presentation, however, was on the ability of these tools to share and syndicate content via RSS feeds. Much in the same way Camplese and Penn State use blogs as an open publishing platform, Groom sees Wordpress (and other blog tools) as a “web–based publishing platform is that with the right technology it quickly becomes a powerful, open, and lightweight syndication hub.”
Groom continues:

“What this basically means is that every author on UMW Blogs is able to create their own space in seconds, and then quickly and easily syndicate it out to a series of other sites. You can think of the course blogs as an aggregation of specifically tagged feeds from student blogs that populate a course space, but still allow students to keep control over their own work which they own, and can export and take with them as they see fit. Kind of an aggregation of individualized digital notebooks, portfolios, or what have you that can be transferred between spaces quickly and easily, allowing a wide-range of publishing and mobile possibilities.” (click here for more of Jim Groom’s presentation)

Geo–what?

According to the 2009 Horizon Report, “Geo–Everything” will significantly impact teaching, learning, research and creative expression within the next two to three years. (The report covers 5 other technologies, but geo–everything is my favorite.)

What is it?

Geolocation (geocoding or geotagging) means using data about location, whether it’s where you are or where a photo or other data was taken. Every place on earth has a unique set of coordinates (longitude, latitude and altitude) that can be detected by GPS receivers. These receivers are now being included in many devices.

Geolocation is not new; people have been tracking their movements (and the movements of animals) for years. I’ve used a GPS device to record and create tracks of where I’ve been and to tag photos to map on Google Earth for several years. What is new are small, multifunctional devices like the iPhone that have GPS built in, so it is easier to record or use location information. For example, students could be investigating the distribution of a plant species, or investigating medical care in an underdeveloped country. Students can take pictures, video and record notes, while the device automatically records the location and displays it on a map. The new devices eliminate the need for a separate GPS unit while simplifying the steps to create annotated, precise maps. The devices also allow communication based on location. For example, imagine a student waiting for the C2 bus, worried about her German class. The device in her pocket may let her know that someone within a few feet of her is also taking German and would like to practice German as they wait for the bus.

What are these devices? Some are pictured here. Wired has a comparison of 5 currently available devices, including the iPhone; it’s likely more will be available soon.

People are already using geolocation here at Duke. For example,

- **Victoria Szabo**, and **Richard Lucic** (ISIS) are exploring devices for creating multimedia maps creating multimedia maps with their research capstone course and Duke Engage
- **Julie Reynolds** (Biology) citizen scientist project maps the location of invasive plants
- **Trudy Abel** (History) has collected historical information, including maps for Digital Durham
- **Peter Haff**’s students (NSOE) mapped their field trip to the southwest desert using Google Earth
- **Pat Halpin**’s Marine Geospatial Ecology lab uses mapping to look at marine ecology, resource management and ocean conservation issues
- **Alex Glass**’s (NSOE) course mapped the location of virtual oil field
- **Gary Gereffi** (Sociology) has created maps demonstrating North Carolina’s role in the Global Economy
- **Ken Glander** (Evolutionary Anthropology) is working on tracking the daily activity of lemurs

For a more frivolous, but more concrete view of current possibilities, see Wired’s description of 10 applications that make the most of location.
For a short description of how geolocation works and how it can be used in teaching, see the pdf “7 things you should know about geolocation”, or read more in the Horizon Report (pdf).