CIT Monthly News and Events
September 30, 2009

In This Edition

- Upcoming events in October
- Technology workshops for everyone
- EtherPad: real-time collaborative writing
- Bb Tip: Catch up with your reading on the Blackboard Discussion Board
- Explore cell phones in teaching
- Using video to comment on student writing
- Talking about Tweeting – DDI Twitter Lunch

Upcoming events: October 2009

10/01/09  DDI WordPress MU Pilot Office Hours
10/07/09  Stop Flipping Out: Working with Flip video cameras
10/07/09  Lecture busters: Keeping students engaged
10/08/09  DDI Twitter Brown Bag Lunch Discussion
10/08/09  DDI WordPress MU Pilot Office Hours
10/08/09  Mobile Devices in Education
10/13/09  Teaching IDEAS: “Responding Efficiently and Effectively to Student Writing”
10/15/09  DDI WordPress MU Pilot Office Hours
10/15/09  Blackboard Advisory Group Meeting
10/22/09  DDI WordPress MU Pilot Office Hours
10/26/09  Avoiding “Death by PowerPoint”
10/27/09  Teaching IDEAS Duke Undergraduates: What every TA ought to know
10/29/09  DDI WordPress MU Pilot Office Hours

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

Technology workshops for everyone

Want to learn more about Photoshop, Excel, Duke’s wiki or how to use your Flip videocamera? Duke’s Office of Information Technology (OIT) is ready for you. See their full list of workshops.
Workshops are open to staff, students and faculty, register to save a space for yourself.

If you’d rather learn at lunch time, attend a presentation in the LearnIT@Lunch Seminar Series. Everyone is welcome, and you don’t have to register.

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**EtherPad: real-time collaborative writing**

A Mashable blog post listing “15 Essential Web Tools for Students” includes several tools that faculty may also find useful. We’ve written about Evernote, Delicious, Zotero and even Google Docs before (and they’re all a part of our Web2.0 Toolkit). One newer web app mentioned in the post is worth noting: EtherPad.

At first glance, EtherPad is not too unlike Google Docs – it’s also an online word processing tool of sorts. However, even though Google Docs allows collaboration with others (by sharing and editing the document), it only allows one user to edit the document at a time. EtherPad allows collaborative editing by several users in real-time.

EtherPad is still relatively new, meaning the editing features aren’t exactly robust – but when you’re doing collaborative writing, getting ideas down quickly is more important that the final formatting and markup. Word, HTML and text files can all be imported into a “pad” or you can just start from scratch. Pads can be exported in various formats (text, PDF, Word, etc), and there’s even a nifty “time slider” feature that can “play back” all the edits via a timeline.

No doubt, those teaching writing courses, or other courses that need to be able to capture rapid text–based collaboration, have been waiting or a tool like this. Here’s the catch:

- Pads are free and public by default. You can invite anyone else by emailing them a URL (they don’t even need an EtherPad account). The downside here is that the Pad is public and anyone could potentially view it.
- Free, public pads are limited to 16 users. That’s 16 users at the same time. Here in the library, we recently used Etherpad as a way to collaboratively construct notes during a guest speaker’s session – the only problem being that more than 16 people wanted to add something and basically had to wait until someone one of the other 16 users would “leave” the pad.
- Want privacy and the option for more users? EtherPad has a “pro” version available.

**NOTE:** If you’d like to try EtherPad, you can try it by editing the document in the screenshot (the text of this blog post).

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**Bb Tip:** Catch up with your reading on the Blackboard
Discussion Board

Do you find it is tedious to read a large number of discussion threads, needing multiple clicks to read each one, reply, and read more? Let us introduce you to an efficient way to save you from clicking, clicking, clicking…

The “Collect” feature within the discussion board places forum posts and replies into a single “flat” page view that only requires a little scrolling to read all.

To use “Collect” to view ALL posts and replies in a forum:

- Choose “Select All” from the drop-down control and then click the “Go” button.
- Click on the “Collect” button.

To use “Collect” to view selected set of threads in a forum:

- Place a check in the box next to each posting or a set of thread (using Expand or Collapse to see or hide all replies)
- Click on the “Collect” button

You can filter, and sort threads by author’s name (choosing to view only one or more author’s posts), date, subject, order, and overall rating.
Explore cell phones in teaching

Meet with other Duke faculty and talk about ideas for using cell phones (or any small, mobile devices) in teaching, both in and outside the classroom.

At a previous meeting, participants discussed using these devices in class to engage students and foster interaction. Owen Astrachan demonstrated how he used Poll Everywhere with his class of 344 students. Poll Everywhere allows students to use their own devices as personal response systems, to give answers electronically in class.

Other participants discussed using applications that provide information relevant to the course, like Epocrates for accessing drug information, Labs 360 as a medical laboratory guide, or other applications for medical students. Other examples might be using the mobile version of the Wall Street Journal in a business class, flash cards for organic chemistry reactions, or spreadsheet applications for laboratories.

We discussed how instructors could incorporate the social networking and connectedness of applications like Smule’s Ocarina to engage students, and how Twitter could be used to build a
Using video to comment on student writing

Julie Reynolds, in Duke’s Biology Department, was recently showcased on the Techsmith’s education blog for her innovative use of Jing, a program that captures images and video of your computer screen.

Dr. Reynolds uses Jing to comment on her students’ writing, and to have students comment on each others’ writing projects. Dr. Reynolds pointed out that when it’s impossible to schedule face-to-face conferences, she can talk about students’ writing rather than simply to write comments in the margins. Jing allows her to record highlighted passages for students to see while she talks about them. Her students also use Jing to comment on each other’s papers.

Read a fuller description on Techsmith’s blog.
See examples of Dr. Reynolds’ review and student peer review.

Talking about tweeting – DDI Twitter lunch

Earlier in September, several of us met as part of the monthly DDI Twitter program brown bag lunch discussion series. One of the overall goals of the program is to encourage a few faculty members to actively use Twitter in their courses, but another goal is to have meaningful discussions among interested faculty on academic uses of Twitter.

After introductions, I provided a list of potential uses of Twitter in a course (below). We discussed everyone’s ideas for using Twitter, which ranged from trying out Twitter in a language class to tweeting as an entire discipline to develop its community. Attendees were concerned about privacy, as far as FERPA and HIPAA, and representing the university as an institution. Attendees expressed a need for Duke to have an explicit social media policy, without stifling its use. Despite perceived complications, there was a lot of excitement about potential for spontaneous student participation, particularly from those who are more introverted. I also demonstrated two Twitter clients for following a large volume of tweets, Tweetdeck for the desktop and the web-based Tweetgrid. Two additional discussions sessions have already been scheduled for this fall, so you can register now.
Use cases for which all students would need a mobile device, laptop or be in a lab during class:

- Polling each student within class
- Participating in a class “back channel,” which would consist of lecture summaries, commentary and questions

Use cases for which a portion, but not all, of students would have access to a mobile device or other computer during class:

- Tweeting in groups of 3 to 5 students where the tweets reflect the group consensus following a discussion

Use cases for which students would have access to a mobile device, laptop or desktop machine outside of class:

- Students could receive information tweeted by the instructor and/or teaching staff on course administrative issues and reminders.
- Students could receive tweets from the instructor and/or the teaching staff on course related topics.
- Students may tweet containing links to course related research.
- Students may tweet reflections on course materials and course related topics.
- Students may search for tweets using course related keywords or follow relevant #hashtags (e.g. #iranelection)
- Students may follow experts in the course discipline or pertinent public figures.
- Students may use Twitter to conduct interviews with one or more followers.
- Students may tweet notes from course readings.
- Students may tweet field observations or lab results.
- Students participating in service learning could communicate from a remote location and record observations or reflections.
- Both students participating in remote service learning or study abroad could use Twitter to maintain a connection with their classmates or advisers on campus.
- Foreign language students may tweet in the course language and follow Tweeters from their respective countries.
- Students may tweet to request help from classmates, the instructor or teaching staff.
- Students may tweet creatively, taking advantage of the 140 character limit in order to condense a large idea into a brief statement (e.g. literary works, world religions described in a single tweet)
- Students may do research using tweets as data.