What's New At Online Instruction

Cathy Cheal
Office of Online Instruction

The new location on the fourth floor of Sierra Hall has proven to be very beneficial for Online Instruction in that our offices are now centralized around the new Faculty Lab. We have been able to help a couple hundred faculty and staff with various technology projects this past fall. Due to the demand for the Faculty Lab in the fall, we will continue to keep the Lab open until all grades are due by faculty at the end of the spring semester. The lab is open during the semester from 1-5pm Mon. through Fri. with tech help available. All faculty are welcome on a drop-in basis.

New software has arrived for the Faculty Lab and will be installed soon. Adobe Acrobat, Illustrator, Flash, Premiere, and Painter will be added to the MacIntosh machines.

We are offering many more workshops for the spring semester, including Flashlight, a database for online surveys, a new series on Digital Imagery, and a Web-enhanced series for faculty wanting to learn a few online teaching techniques such as bulletin boards, quizzes, and chat.

A new Faculty-In-Residence program has started this spring which will provide reassigned time for an experienced faculty member to work on special projects for Online Instruction. Our first Faculty-in-Residence will be Ken Chapman from the Economics department, who will be working on a database program for online student evaluations of completely online courses.

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What's the Hype about HyperNews?

Ilene Rubenstein
Writing Program Coordinator

Few of us would disagree that our most important classroom activity is communication—whether lecturing to our students, encouraging questions and answers between us and the students, or promoting student-led group discussions among the students. How does this technique effectively move into online instruction?

Chat channels, certainly, promote student and professor communication, but just as in the classroom, these synchronous discussions don’t allow much for reflective thought. How many times, after speaking with someone, have you thought “I should have said”?

HyperNews, an asynchronous communication tool, not only eliminates this problem by allowing a Wordsworthian reflection in tranquility (or at least in privacy in front of your own computer!), but also promotes and fosters the pedagogy of communication: it offers students an engrossing opportunity to learn how to engage in, discover and invent rhetorical strategies for contextual and interdisciplinary learning that don’t exist in a traditional classroom. Moreover, in the absence of body language, HyperNews fosters precise language use which further enhances the connection between accurate language and critical thinking.

We might more clearly perceive the power of electronic texts if we imagine doors closing and opening. A traditional text, for example, while it supplies us with much needed information, closes a door in that the written word becomes the text’s finished product. An electronic text such as HyperNews, on the other hand, opens a door in that it allows students to build on what they learn; thus, while traditional reading is still possible, HyperNews allows a new kind of reading in which the elements of meaning and structure change. In his book Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext and the History of Writing, Jay Bolter suggests that “…the computer does not require that any aspect of writing be determined in advance for the whole life of a text.”

Indeed, HyperNews not only allows students to develop their own texts and build on knowledge, it also encourages active, rather than passive learning; it fosters the concept of text as a living, mutable entity which moves writing from dependence on the lone writer to writing that develops and thinking that grows from the interconnectiveness of writers within a subject-specific context.

To find out more about HyperNews and how you might use it, please join us at a HyperNews workshop:
http://www.csun.edu/~webteach/workshops.html

Faculty Lab
Sierra Hall Room 442
Spring Semester 2001
Mon.-Fri. 1-5 pm

Technical Notes
Kate Berggren
Online Teaching Consultant

Information Technology Resources plans upgrades for the Winter Break

Over the winter break, Information Technology Resources will be installing a new Compaq server running Linux to support Online Instruction. Applications that currently run on older hardware will eventually be moved to this server to improve performance. WebCT was upgraded to version 3.6.3.8, so you may notice some changes in the look of its Discussion and Chat.

A new server was also recently purchased and setup to run the latest version of the Blackboard courseware software (version 5.5) which required substantially more processor speed and memory than the previous version. Some Extended Learning faculty and students will begin using this server for course delivery in early January.
SPRING 2002
FACULTY WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

The Office of Undergraduate Studies and Online Instruction are sponsoring Faculty Computer Workshops in order to facilitate online teaching and learning. Call x6558 to make a reservation. We have room for 12 participants. All workshops will be in the new Faculty Lab, Sierra Hall, room 442, on the fourth floor in the southwest corner of the building. Any of the workshops may be taken separately and assume no prior knowledge. Please sign-up for a WebCT account prior to taking a workshop on that topic at: www.csun.edu/~webteach/WebCTHelp.html

CALENDAR

WEBCT SERIES I
LEARN A COURSEWARE PRODUCT, CONTAINING 20 ONLINE TEACHING TOOLS.
DATES AND TIMES:
1. INTRODUCTION TO WEBCT
   THURS FEB. 28, 2PM TO 3:00PM
2. WEBCT DISCUSSION AND CHAT
   THURS MAR. 7, 2PM TO 3:00PM
3. WEBCT QUIZZES AND GRADING
   THURS MAR. 14, 2PM TO 3:30PM
4. WEBCT CONTENT AND FILES
   THURS MAR. 21, 2PM TO 3:00PM

WEBCT SERIES II
DATES AND TIMES:
1. INTRODUCTION TO WEBCT
   FRI APR. 5, 2PM TO 3:00PM
2. WEBCT DISCUSSION AND CHAT
   FRI APR. 12, 2PM TO 3:00PM
3. WEBCT QUIZZES AND GRADING
   FRI APR. 19, 2PM TO 3:30PM
4. WEBCT CONTENT AND FILES
   FRI APR. 26 2PM TO 3:00PM

WORKSHOPS CONT.

FLASHLight
THUR, FEB. 14, 2PM TO 3:00PM
A DEMO OF A SIMPLDL ONLINE DATABASE TOOL FOR SURVEYS AND OTHER PROGRAM ASSESSMENT NEEDS BY INDIVIDUAL FACULTY, DEPARTMENTS, AND PROGRAMS -- EMAIL CATHRYN.CHEAL@CSUN.EDU FOR AN ACCOUNT.

TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY
TUES MAR. 12 2PM TO 3:30PM
A DEMO/DISCUSSION ABOUT ONLINE PEDAGOGY (NOT A HANDS ON WORKSHOP--IN THE CELT CONFERENCE ROOM)

WEB IMAGES SERIES
I. DREAMWeaver
   THURS APR. 11, 2PM TO 3:00PM
   CREATE A WEBPAGE IN AN HTML EDITOR

II. DIGITAL IMAGES AND PHOTOSHOP
   THURS APR. 18, 2PM TO 3:00PM
   TAKE DIGITAL PICTURES, CORRECT IN PHOTOSHOP, AND THEN UPLOAD TO A WEBPAGE OR WEBCT.

III. DIGITAL VIDEO AND IMovie
   THURS APR. 25, 2PM TO 3:00PM
   SHOOT A SHORT VIDEO, EDIT IN IMovie, AND THEN UPLOAD TO A WEBPAGE OR WEBCT.

WEB-ENHANCED COURSE SERIES
I. WEBPAGE CREATION--HTML EDITORS
   1. NETSCAPE I
      MON MAR. 4, 2PM TO 3:00PM
   2. NETSCAPE II
      MON MAR. 11, 2PM TO 3:00PM
   3. ARACHNOPHILIA I
      TUES MAR. 5, 2PM TO 3:00PM
   4. ARACHNOPHILIA II
      TUES MAR. 12, 2PM TO 3:00PM

II. HYPERNews--BULLETIN BOARD
   MON APR. 8, 2PM TO 3:00PM OR
   TUES APR. 9, 2PM TO 3:00PM

III. QUIZMAKER--ONLINE QUIZZES
   MON APR. 15, 2PM TO 3:00PM OR
   TUES APR. 16, 2PM TO 3:00PM

IV. INTERNet Relay Chat (IRC)
   MON APR. 22, 2PM TO 3:00PM OR
   TUES APR. 23, 2PM TO 3:00PM
Inventing the Internet... Again, and Again...

Randal Cummings
Coordinator of Student Computing

During all the bi-partisan campaign promises, posturing, hyperbole slingling, and pure braggadocio/boasting of the last presidential election, Al Gore nonchalantly stated that he had "invented the internet." A lot of journalists scoffed at such a preposterous assertion, but I think I know what he meant. Or, at least, I know what I would mean, were I to have made such a statement.

The Internet is such an integral part my teaching, research, and collegial communications as to have become a Mode-of Being in the world. Indeed, as an implementer, facilitator, and instructor of completely online courses, there are now hundreds of students and dozens of faculty for whom I would not exist outside of the interface made present by the Internet. This mode of existence as an internet entity has not rendered me any less real, in fact my "reality" as a teacher has over-spilled the boundaries of physical presence to have a much greater impact than I could ever have achieved in mere classroom-bound existence. Several students now hold their very real diplomas in hand because they were able to complete missing General Education requirements online. For those students I am all the more real. But how did this happen? The answer is simple: by increments.

I was first enticed into the world of cyber-pedagogy by a simple challenge to utilize some aspect of the Internet to enhance my traditional courses. I had already been using email in lieu of stringently scheduled office hours, so the next step was to put my syllabus online. If you have not done this, you will not believe how much your semester will be simplified by such an expedient move. The next step was bolder. I created an online bulletin board forum for class discussion topics including those "Frequently Asked Questions" that I now had to definitively answer only once. (See Ilene’s article on HyperNews.) An even bolder venture was the first time I substituted a regular class meeting for a meeting in cyberspace via an online “chat” session. I recall sitting at my home computer in fear, trembling, and trepidation (all known as "cyber-angst") as I waited for the students to arrive. Would they be able to successfully navigate from their own home computers, cyber-cafe laptops, or open labs? Would they have anything to say? Would I be able to hold their attention for the full hour? One by one and in twos and fours, they began to arrive. We were off and running. Before I knew it an hour-and-a-half had expired and the class discussion was more replete than it had ever been in a space-based classroom (for some reason, shy students lose their self-consciousness in online chat). That first web-enhanced course turned out to be far more engaging in luring my students into the subject matter of the course than any single thing I had ever tried in the past. Online bulletin boards are far more vibrant than the weekly journals I used to require and online class discussions create greater bonds, empathy, and sympatico among students than I had previously witnessed. Collective group projects, research scavenger hunts, and online study sessions (often aided by online self-test study guides) helped to cement course content as a structure of consciousness in my students' minds. I was hooked. Today, when I look at my fully online courses and see what they have become now, I wonder where I would be without those first simple increments. Did I invent the internet? Some days it feels like it...

Student Workshops
[Link: www.vcsun.org/~ccheal/studentindex.html]

Email Randal Cummings at randal.cummings@csun.edu

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