The Student Multimedia Studio's

5 Tips for Building a Multimedia "Bicycle"

Just because you know how to ride a bicycle doesn't necessarily mean you know how to build one.

To successfully build a bicycle not only do you need the right tools for the job like Phillips and flat head screwdrivers or even specialized tools like metric sockets or star-head screwdrivers but, without a parts list to make sure you have everything you need, schematic diagrams to show you how the parts fit together and step-by-step instructions to make sure you assemble critical parts in the right order, most people are generally lost.

The same holds true for students working with multimedia, even more so because while they can just go out and buy a bicycle, they can't go out and buy the multimedia project you assigned… we hope. Remember… just because students "ride" the multimedia wave with cell phones and Facebook, they generally need help when it comes to building their own multimedia from scratch.

1. **Having the right tool for the job**

   Technologies advance so rapidly that it's difficult for anyone except the most diehard techno-geek to keep track of all of them. At the SMS, we not only do our best to stay abreast of new and developing technologies and tools, but we also try them out to make sure that they will work in an academic setting by a wide range of users. This includes the "specialized" tools needed to acquire and convert video, audio and images from among the dozens of different types of recording equipment with as many different types of formats into the ONE format that can be used for a specific type of project. If you haven't done so already, you might want to contact the SMS to verify that the software "tools" that you're having your students use is in fact the best and easiest tool for your particular assignment and to find out if your students will need to have any specialized equipment or software for acquisition or format conversion.

2. **"Parts Lists" and "Schematics"**

   Providing a detailed description of the requirements for a project and a grading rubric goes a long way toward helping students understand what they have to do. From our experience of helping thousands of students coming into the SMS, we've discovered that students who arrive with detailed project guidelines and rubrics do far better than students without them. "Parts lists" and "schematics" might include a list of software and equipment and places where they can access them, like the SMS or labs in your department, web links for downloading their own free software and project description outlining all the required elements for your project.

3. **Step-by-Step Instructions** (*We call them tutorials)*

Having simple, easy to follow step-by-step instructions are essential for many students to advance through unfamiliar and complex multimedia production processes and terminologies. Illustrations can also make the difference between success and failure especially when words can't describe what's happening.

If you find that your students are having difficulty with the multimedia assignments, refer them to the SMS website page, http://www.library.kent.edu/smstutorials for a tutorial on general project assignments or specific tools. These include Audio Essays using Audacity, Digital Storytelling using PhotoStory or Windows Movie Maker, Powerpoint Essays and Presentations with multimedia components, and ePortfolios using Google Sites among dozens of others.

4. **Get "expert" advice**

When your "bicycle" ends up looking like a "unicycle" and you have lots of parts left over, it may be time to go to an expert for help. The SMS' student multimedia consultants can be your student's last resort and, in some cases, might be their first. The SMS consultants are available to help your students with just about any technical difficulties they may be having with multimedia software or equipment. More often than not, this just means going back over the tutorial you've provided or one of ours that they used just to make sure they didn't skip any steps or followed each direction carefully. But sometimes it might mean that they need access to the vast array of specialized software and equipment only available in the SMS. Sometimes they just need help installing and configuring a "free" program that they downloaded from one of our website's "Free Software" links. No matter what they need… we can help!

5. **It's not too late to request a specialized tutorial or in-class workshop.**

If you can't find a tutorial on the SMS' website that works for your project, contact the SMS' manager, Gary Mote, to see if he can create a tutorial specifically for you or he could arrange to come to your classroom for a quick hands-on workshop that will walk them through the project or address any problems they may be having with their projects. Additionally, he might even be able to suggest an easier to use software or work-flow that will achieve the same or better results.

Find out more…

Visit the Student Multimedia Studio Website for links to Tutorials or Free Software or other information about the SMS at: http://www.library.kent.edu/sms. You can also contact the manager at gmote@kent.edu or by phone at 330.672.1851