Five Tips for Successful Student Multimedia Projects

Successful student multimedia projects start with a solid assignment. This is the first of a series of articles from the Student Multimedia Studio (SMS) intended to provide faculty with multimedia assignment tips. This article about general considerations will be followed in the future by tips for web projects, PowerPoint assignments, video projects, and more. All of these articles will also be available on the Faculty Support pages on the Student Multimedia Studio Website.

1.   Start with Pedagogy, not with Technology.

Too often, multimedia projects start with the desire to use a specific technology then try to "fit" the pedagogy in later. This often results in disaster for both faculty and students since teaching/learning objectives are often diluted or completely missed. Make use of the Faculty Professional Development Center's team of professionals to help you develop a pedagogically sound approach to your multimedia assignments.

2.   Try it yourself.

Start your project on one computer and then move it to another computer to finish it--just as many students will have to do when working both at home and at school. This is the point where many of your students' projects will start to fail. Then submit the finished project to yourself in the way you will want your students to submit their projects to you. This may be as an email attachment, saved to CD-R or jump drive, as an upload to your Vista Course or to the Kent Personal Server. Finally, open and view the "submitted" project on your own or your classroom's computer to see if it really works.

3.   Don't assume that your students know how to create a multimedia project from start to finish without help.

From the SMS' experience of helping more than 4,000 students each semester, students will need help with at least one critical aspect of every type of multimedia project. Most students know the "basics" but very few have the advanced knowledge required to successfully incorporate multimedia components into their project. Providing your students with project specific tutorials or setting aside class time for a demonstration or workshop will build their confidence and start them on a productive path. Also, don't assume a common platform, the fact that students may be using PCs or MACs with totally different software and types of problems, needs to be in your planning process (i.e., assigning groups).

4.   Try to make use of readily available "freeware", MS Office and "i-Tools" as well as Web 2.0 resources.

There's usually a way to create most multimedia projects without using expensive specialized software like Dreamweaver, Photoshop, Camtasia Studio, and similar "high-end" software packages that require students to work on their projects in the classroom or in specialized labs. Also, confirm that specialized equipment like digital voice recorders, camcorders and scanners will be available in the quantities and for the duration needed by students to work on their projects.

5.   Contact the Student Multimedia Studio and make use of the SMS' website resources.

Find out what thousands of students have taught us works best for both faculty and themselves. We're ready and willing to help you create assignments or solve any problems that came up when you tried to make the presentation yourself. Invite us to come to your class with a demonstration, or work with you to create a project-specific tutorial. Visit the SMS' website for a wealth of information, including tutorials and links to freeware and Web 2.0 resources. We will even "test" your project on PC and MAC platforms using different versions of software to make sure everything will work for your students. We can also help connect you with the other campus resources like the FPDC, AV Services, IRC, ET, or other departments that can assist you or your students.

For more information:

- SMS: contact Gary Mote, Manager (gmote@kent.edu) or visit the SMS website at: *http://www.library.kent.edu/sms*
- FPDC: contact Jeffrey Pellegrino, Asst. Director (jpelleg1@kent.edu) or visit the FPDC website at: *http://fpdc.kent.edu/*
- Video and audio recording equipment checkout: Audio Visual Services (AVS) at: 330-672-3456