

<http://thunder1.cudenver.edu/ilt/tie2008/index.php>

My Past Use of Technologies for Learning

I was originally a Technical Communications major before graduating with an Information Systems undergraduate degree in 2003; consequently I'd had some coursework in and experience with multimedia design concepts, digital photography and videography, and graphic design. In the Information Systems program, I learned to code C, Visual Basic, and HTML manually, and eventually learned a fair amount of Dreamweaver. Since graduation, I have gained intermediate – level programming skills in the JavaScript, SQL, and PHP languages, and I have developed considerable expertise using Adobe Captivate.

Through the course of my master's in Information and Learning Technology program, I have learned a wide variety of applications and workflows used to create learning courses and tools, including Adobe Fireworks and Dreamweaver, iMovie and Garageband, Wordpress, SnapzPro, and more.

Initially, I learned to create website comps in Fireworks, and then I learned to use slices to export them to Dreamweaver for final edits and deployment. Even though this workflow is pretty quick and effective, I feel that the resulting HTML files are cluttered with a lot of confusing code and way too many images (a result of the slicing into tables). Also, I am passionate about accessibility and endeavor to use XHTML and CSS in order to create clean and accessible websites for all viewers and viewing technology. Now, I still use Fireworks exhaustively, but only for preparing my images for the web. I find it an exceptional piece of software for creating and optimizing web graphics.

In my video editing class I learned to use iMovie and Garageband to develop web movies (and along the way I fell in love with the Mac!). That class was particularly helpful because the instructor gave great details about video compression choices, and other problems and issues related to video on the

web. I was able to create DVDs of my projects using a variety of codecs for various viewers with older equipment. I also learned how to use Wordpress to instantly and easily create a blog site, and I brought in SnapzPro to quickly capture some stills and movies. I soon bought my own Mac, and have been learning Final Cut Express. I hope to explore some additional Mac software in the near future, like the iWork suite, which I learned about at the TIE conference.

The biggest obstacle to me is a sweet one – there are so many choices in learning technology today! I have finally admitted to myself that I cannot learn/become an expert in everything. I have decided that I need to subscribe to a few choice RSS feeds related to emerging technologies so that I can make sure whatever technologies I am using are still competitive and fully functional, and so that I can learn about new technologies as they evolve.

My Conference Experience

I have not even begun to realize the benefits from the TIE Conference, but I definitely have a road map! The biggest jolt was the exciting realization that learning technology is here to stay – it is most definitely not a flash in the pan. To see all of those (mature!) K-12 teachers excited about incorporating technologies such as blogs, wikis, websites, and digital storytelling into their curriculum was surprising and encouraging.

I believe my digital storytelling will be more effective because of the instruction of keynote speaker, Jason Ohler. He introduced me to more detailed script-writing practices than I have been introduced to thus far, and I will make sure I implement those principles into my digital stories going forward.

I was completely jazzed about Dan Cornell's 3D session. How exciting it was to hear that his students were finding \$50-an-hour jobs right out of high school! I was able to sit down with a student

who let me build a landscape in MAYA – very interesting. I downloaded a free student version and look forward to playing with it soon. I don't know if or how 3D animation will factor into my work, but just knowing the capabilities exist is helpful.

From John Lamb's "Hollywood in the Classroom" session, I learned about zamzar.com – file-conversion beta software (free, of course) that I find really intriguing. I believe this technology will help me when I am in a hurry to convert a file to a pdf, or convert an .ac3 to a .wav file for quick insertion into Captivate files.

The only disappointment I had about the TIE conference was that, as always with these types of events, there were break-out sessions I missed and for which I would love to have the handouts, but none are available. Furthermore, I must admit I was dismayed at the lack of handouts in general - I am a trainer and I know – people love and appreciate handouts!

I was also very disappointed that Howard DiBlasi's Web 2.0 session was so crowded – there really wasn't any way to even pull in an extra chair, and there are no handouts available.

What Now?

My immediate goals are to organize and document my workflow so that I can become more efficient in producing my learning projects. This will entail deciding on a definitive workflow for each type of project, creating checklists, deciding on file structure, etc. Before doing this, however, I want to spend a few weeks looking into all of the valuable TIE resources I learned about, particularly the Web 2.0 sources Howard DiBlasi listed in his session summary, the iwork suite I learned about in Elizabeth Walhof's session, and Jason Ohler's Digital Storytelling book. Because I have only a few hundred dollars a year in budget for software in my current job, I would like to take advantage of tools like zamzar and the nominally-priced iwork suite. I believe once I absorb all of the current possibilities in learning

technology, I will be able to design an efficient workflow using the easiest yet most effective tools out there today. I look forward to combining all of this new knowledge with my organizational skills to enhance my learning projects.