More than just another video

Enhancing your content with interactive pop-ups

If you were lucky enough to be at the right age in the late ’90’s, this image would signal to your brain that it is about to learn some cool stuff that it didn’t know it wanted, while being entertained by music videos. Fun facts: Jerry Garcia only had 9 1/2 fingers. The flush toilet dates back to 2000 BC. Meatloaf, the singer, is a vegetarian. (Lost? Click here to see what I’m talking about.)

The idea was simple: Increase interest and fun by adding a layer of quirky information over the video. As an instructor, you can make better use of your lecture videos or add meaty content to otherwise superficial, yet entertaining, fluff that you find on the web.

Thanks to some recent techno-wizardry that you don’t need to understand, it is now possible to embed text, links, photos, Wikipedia articles, Google maps, and Twitter feeds into the timeline of an online video. The tool, Mozilla PopcornMaker, allows you choose a YouTube or Vimeo video, then simply drag and drop into the video the information that you are teaching.

Because any of the pop-ups you add can be linked to online resources, you can turn your video into the jumping-off point for student research projects. The video is the motivator, complete with the links that students will need to work toward their solution. Or your video can help students access the primary resources that you use to develop your lessons, allowing them to explore the material on their own.

To learn how to make pop-up videos and to see some examples of Mozilla PopcornMaker in action, including a Pop-up TED talk and how I use a clip from The Big Bang Theory to teach about constructing flow charts, visit my blog.

New tutorials on the blog:

Some recent additions that didn’t make it into a newsletter...

- Using Dropbox to store and share files online
- Getting started with YouTube
  - Starting an account and uploading videos
  - Adding enhancements, audio, annotations, and captions to your videos
- Using Google Drive to store and share files and to edit documents (actually an older tutorial, but you might be interested)

Or if you’d like a more in-depth, guided tour... ...

Soon to come from IT-Learning Technologies:

Google Day(s)

In early April (TBD) the Learning Technologies group will dive into the features of Google Education Apps, looking at Drive, Forms, Sheets, Presentations, plus using YouTube and Picasa photo editing (owned by Google, so we’ll allow them.) Also learn about Google Power-searching to find better results faster when you search. Keep an eye out for announcements.
The Un-Clicker
Low-tech, real-time student assessment on the cheap

$14.99, plus tax, will fund a 32-student, personal response system. No wires to set up... no complicated software... no pressure to convert your classroom Q&A to multiple choice format...

One might say, “The inventor of the system deserves to be ranked among the best contributors to learning and science, if not the greatest benefactors of mankind,” but then one might realize that this is a quote from 1841 about the inventor of the chalkboard.

But, if all you need from a clicker system is the ability to ask students questions and have them immediately give you their answers, what is simpler than a personal chalkboard? Well, OK, we have improved a little since 1841, so let’s replace that with a personal whiteboard.

Remove the ability to check individual student attendance and track student progress throughout a class or semester, which is the main (and not to be ignored) techno-benefit from an electronic clicker system, and a square foot piece of whiteboard might have a strong edge on the clicker system when it comes to student interaction and capabilities.

How it works:

- Go to a hardware store. Let’s say... Sutherland’s.
- Find the aisle where unusual “lumber” like pegboard lives. Let’s say... aisle 37.
- Find a 4’x8’ sheet of 1/8” thick “tile board.” Let’s say... 3/4 of the way down the aisle, on the left side, ground level.
- Cut it into 32 square-foot pieces. Or, maybe 16 pieces that are 1ft x 2ft. Whatever floats your boat. (For a fee that I didn’t think to check while I was there, Sutherlands might be able to cut it for you.)
- Bring dry-erase markers to your class, or have students bring their own.
- Ask questions. Have students write and present answers. Give feedback.
  - Sketch a diagram of ________.
  - What style of writing is this?
  - Sketch a graph of what you think will happen if ________.
  - Correctly conjugate this French word.
- Amaze your colleagues with the types of interaction your class has, now that students are more visibly sharing answers, debating points, and explaining thought processes.

Visit my blog to see a video of (larger) whiteboards being used in a physics course to engage students and increase the quality of their discussions.