



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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Using the Computer as a Motivational Tool

Five short years ago, when I first got a computer in my office, I knew that I would use it for e-mail and office work. Little did I know then how important it would become to every facet of my students' learning and my teaching. Now, maximizing my use of computers has not only renewed my excitement about teaching, but it has become an integral part of my work with both students and faculty.

Right away, I knew that the use of computers could affect the educational process in the classroom directly. Sure enough, when that first computer was replaced with an upgraded model, I put my old computer on a cart and rolled it into my design class—where, happily, I had discovered an unused computer jack.

My students were just starting to work on designs to fit some large cardboard circles. One student's initial sketch was very crude, but it reminded me of designs by the Northwest Coast Indians. For a second, I almost fell back on an old habit—telling him to go to the library and look up Indian art. But instead, I asked him to conduct a web search. He was amazed when the first image he found looked shockingly like his, but with a design sophistication developed from the Indians' years of practice.

The quick and easy access to research data experienced by that first student was so rewarding that I immediately changed the project to have students conduct their research on the web. They had to find

those students who were also in art history classes began to see the relevance of research in art to their other current art projects.

When all the circular designs were finished, I had the students hang an exhibit of their works for public viewing. A printout of the relevant web page was posted beside each work, and a comment sheet where viewers could jot down their thoughts for the artists was hung below each piece. The exhibit has been favorably received. The quality of the design students' work was noticeably improved by using the instant and direct search of the web.

Moreover, other classes benefited from working on the web. For art appreciation classes, I had book-marked virtual tours to art museums that housed some of the works we had been studying. Taking a virtual tour of the Louvre held the students' interest and gave them a more realistic idea of the size of these works than they had been able to get by viewing the slides I had used in the past.

Faculty Innovation Center

In addition to teaching art, I have begun supervising the Faculty Innovation Center on a volunteer basis. Two late-model computers, with up-to-date hardware and software accessories, are available in the Center for all faculty. It has been rewarding to meet informally with other teachers and to carry on the FIC tradition of sharing ideas about new technology.

Fairly simple activities have gotten instructors interested in expanding their use of technology: scanning an old typewritten test into Word so that it can be edited and updated without time-consuming retyping; adding photographs of family, pets, and vacations as wallpaper have made their computers more personal and user-friendly; learning to use a digital camera so that pictures and other visual images can be incorporated into handouts and tests; or completing classroom rolls with individual student pictures.

I have been experimenting with freehand drawing on computers for several years. (An example precedes this paragraph.) Spring 1999, I am teaching Drawing I over the Internet. In preparing my materials and activities for



NW Coast Indian Art



Students' Initial Idea

examples of art that were similar to the styles of their initial sketches and could use the computer in the classroom or in the labs on campus.

Some of the students were very familiar with the web, while others had to be instructed in how to conduct searches. I could offer computer help in the classroom, as well as help others with the actual painting and art aspects of their projects. A bonus was that



this course, I enlisted the help of students who were relatively familiar with computers and enrolled in traditional on-campus courses. We practiced methods of drawing in Microsoft Paint and sending and receiving the drawings. I found that all of my traditional class assignments could be completed on computers without adding special software. The students who helped me in these experiments were excited to be pioneers and enjoyed using their computers as drawing tools.



Bonus Benefits

Traditional classroom instruction can benefit from an infusion of some Internet instruction. For example, during one term when I lost my voice, I took my class to the computer lab where students read the instructions and drew on the computers, and I typed and sketched back the corrections.

Internet instructors may be recruited from computer-savvy faculty for this fast-growing segment of our educational community. Faculty who keep current with instructional technology benefit themselves, their students, and their institutions. They tend to keep their material more current than their colleagues who are more tradition-bound. By and large, not only are these teachers highly motivated, but they seem to enjoy their teaching more than do many of their peers. Moreover, and particularly important to the learning process, the enjoyment and motivation that these faculty demonstrate are highly contagious!

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