Introducing Technology to Educators in a Way that is Compelling – Not Intimidating: Support Issues

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ABSTRACT
Introducing technology to educators in an education-centered way requires dedicated and specialized staff, workspace and equipment.

Keywords  
Computing site, faculty computing, multimedia.

1. INTRODUCTION
Typical university technology support and computing resources do not address the unique needs of faculty members developing multimedia. Supporting faculty use of technology in an education-centered manner requires staff, workspace and equipment that are dedicated to faculty use and specialized for their needs. At the University of Delaware the PRESENT (i.e., Practical Resources for Educators Seeking Effective New Technologies), a computing and technology center dedicated solely for the use of faculty and teaching staff, provides this support.

2. The PRESENT
2.1 Staff
The PRESENT’s staff has special experience and perspective to offer faculty. In addition to three full-time professional staff, we employ two graduate assistants who are Master’s Degree candidates in Educational Technology and approximately ten undergraduate student assistants with skills in programming, multimedia and graphic design. The full-time staff and graduate assistants help the faculty define their educational goals and identify technologies to achieve those goals. The undergraduate assistants work with the faculty to learn and implement the necessary technologies. By emphasizing specific teaching goals and then introducing technologies that can achieve those goals, we seek to help educators integrate technology into their teaching in an education-centered way rather than a technology-centered way.

2.2 Workspace
The PRESENT’s physical space is designed to both simulate a classroom and encourage collaborative work. Traditional computing sites usually have a single seat per workstation, encouraging individual work. The PRESENT’s workstations each have three seats and a large screen monitor, encouraging faculty members to work collaboratively with our staff or other faculty. A small conference table equipped with network and video connections for laptops facilitates small group discussions and demonstrations. An overhead projector wired into a switching matrix allows any workstation or laptop to be projected. Faculty members use this projector to preview their work in an environment similar to that in which they will ultimately present -- the classroom.

2.3 Equipment
Creating educational materials is very media-intensive, and requires specialized hardware and software unavailable in most computing sites. The PRESENT has multimedia equipment specifically tailored to creating educational multimedia.

When developing digital teaching materials, most faculty members prefer digitizing their existing materials to recreating them from scratch. To facilitate this, the PRESENT has been outfitted with a variety of scanners, video capture cards and other digitizers. For faculty members that wish to create content that goes beyond a digital copy of existing materials, the PRESENT has a wide range cutting-edge technologies such as a QTVR object rig and an Adobe Premier-based digital video editing station.

Once faculty members have created digital content, they can present it in a variety of ways. All of the PRESENT’s workstations are outfitted with CD-RW drives, enabling faculty members to archive their content. Many faculty members present their content directly off of their disc without creating an interface. Others choose to create a framework for their content with tools such as HTML, PowerPoint, or Authorware.