

Jumping on the YouTube bandwagon? Using digital video clips to develop personalised learning strategies



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This poster presentation illustrates the outcomes and processes involved in the development of a set of exemplar materials to support the assisted take up of a new digital video archive (Newsfilm Online) in the Higher Education community in the UK. The exemplars are underpinned by a conceptual framework based around learning designs and learning spaces which, we believe, are transferable to other digital learning resources.

Background

Despite the burgeoning popularity of user-generated content amongst the so called 'YouTube Generation', the potential of this media as a tool for teaching and learning in Higher Education remains largely unexplored (Young & Asensio, 2002; Karpinnen, 2005). Indeed recent studies have indicated an alarming degree of 'non optimal' uses for video and film which seriously diminish and weaken the value of video as a learning tool (Hobbs, 2006).

This poster presentation seeks to explore pedagogically sound strategies for the use of digital video to develop personalised learning and to engage learners in higher level cognitive activities. The poster illustrates work that is being undertaken by a team of developers and researchers based at The University of Hull, U.K. The team have developed exemplar materials, including a framework for the use of digital video in different learning spaces, based around one of the phase I JISC digitisation projects - http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/programme_digitisation.aspx

This is the Newsfilm Online archive (<http://newsfilm.bufvc.ac.uk/>), a project consisting of over 3,000 hours of television news and cinema newsreels, taken from the collection of the ITN/Reuters archive covering a period from 1910s to the present day, and is being made available to the further and higher education community in the UK, online in high quality format for teaching, learning and research.

Methods

At the beginning of the project members of the team developed a working hypothesis around the probable use of this new archive once it was released to the tertiary community. We postulated that most users, assuming they felt there was a value to searching the collection in the first place, would seek to identify 'content' (we coined the term 'stuff') for their own particular discipline area or subject. It followed from our initial hypothesis that users would be either satisfied with the results of their immediate searches or disenchanted altogether as they failed to discover the precise topic or content they desired. Given the particular nature of the Newsfilm archive which might easily be characterised as a humanities or social sciences resource, we also hypothesised that this approach (one we might characterise as content driven) would leave many users frustrated and disinclined to search further. This line of reasoning led to our early decision to avoid a content driven approach for the exemplars and to identify, instead, a model of use which was driven by 'learning designs' and 'learning spaces'. This model eventually formed the basis of the 'video learning designs' framework which is the focus of this poster.

Learning spaces and learning designs

In attempting to develop an 'efficacious framework' (Shephard, 2003) for the use of digital video in higher education we identified two parameters which we believe are transferable to many other contexts both within and outside of higher education. These parameters are not dependent on the precise content or subject matter of the video assets themselves, but are related to the engagements and activities of the

learner. We believe they apply across discipline and subject boundaries and indeed can most probably be applied to the use of many different digital media types (e.g. digital newspapers).

In the case of the learning spaces continuum we have attempted to categorise in fairly broad terms the likely 'places' in which learners may encounter and use digital video. Initially we imagined this axis would be a continuum stretching through from teacher orientated spaces (e.g. a large lecture theatre) to learner centred spaces (e.g. a workshop or seminar). However we soon came to recognise that ultimately the ownership of this space (e.g. lecturer or student) was less significant in determining how the digital video assets would be used. In the hands of a thoughtful lecturer a large lecture theatre space can be transformed into a playful, student centred environment based on the nature of the learning that is conceptualised. Activity becomes the driver determining the kind of learning which is possible in the various spaces we inhabit, although practical considerations are still likely to play a significant part in determining what actually happens. For this reason we decided to settle on a range of learning spaces that lecturers would recognise and might use as one of the determinants in identifying how to employ a particular digital video resources. These spaces are:

- Large spaces (e.g. lecture theatres)
- Small spaces (e.g. tutorials, seminars)
- Virtual spaces (e.g. online)
- Mobile spaces (e.g. mobile phones, i-Pods)
- Independent spaces (these could be any of the above)

In the **learning design** axis we have currently identified ten different patterns or designs which we believe can be used to engage learners from across all disciplines. In this configuration the determining factor in how digital video is used becomes the learning design rather than the subject content of the clip. It is the learning design that becomes the re-usable learning object not the content of the clip itself. Indeed in our initial trials and developments we deliberately targeted content from the archive that was neither well known or immediately accessible. We aimed to demonstrate how video content of this nature could nonetheless achieve desirable learning outcomes across all disciplines.

Our current learning designs include '**stimulus**' (activities designed to generate interest and student engagement, typically - though not exclusively- at the start and end of teaching sessions), '**narrative**' (digital storytelling), '**collaborative**' (focusing on the interaction and collaboration which occurs between peers when they use video clips to facilitate the construction of knowledge and understanding), '**conceptual/procedural**' (an amalgam of several associated activities designed to optimise the opportunities for students to understand and/or consolidate their learning about concepts, ideas and procedures), '**problem based learning**' (emphasis on the process of students solving a 'real world' 'authentic' problem or issue presented to them), '**Student authoring**' (creating a product or artefact using digital editing tools and the digital video clips themselves), '**empathy/role-play**' ('walking in the shoes of others'), '**research**', '**media-literacy**' (emphasis on 'reading' the moving image as a representation), '**figurative**' (using the video as an allegory or metaphor for other purposes).

From design into practice

Having designed a framework or model for the re-usable use of digital video resources we have now developed a series of exemplar materials which demonstrate the design in practice. Each of the exemplars features commentary and support metadata to help users contextualise and apply the design (not the content itself) into their own schemes of work and practices. It has been gratifying in the early field trials of these exemplars (and the framework itself) to listen to practitioners using the framework tool and beginning to assimilate the designs we have hypothesised. More rewarding still, to listen to variations on our existing theme, and in the case of the 'figurative' learning design, a completely new design put forward by users themselves. Although it is too early to predict with any certainty we are beginning to recognise a recurring pattern of engagement with digital video resources of this nature which we believe is 're-usable' and transferable. With exposure to the ideas and themes which underpin the framework and a development space in which 'learning conversations' (Laurillard, 2002) can be freely explored we believe we have identified a model for the efficacious use of digital video in particular and digital media resources in general.

User-generated exemplars

To encourage students to engage with the resources and to develop the skills and attributes we describe above we are developing a user friendly online space for the exemplars which is based closely on the

YouTube interface. It enables users to rate the exemplars that are available with a simple star system and to leave comments about their value as exemplars. We anticipate a community of practice will develop around the exemplars with users uploading their own re-purposed exemplars which will be cross referenced back into the original framework tool we have established. Students are familiar with the concept behind re-purposed user generated video and it is to be hoped this familiarity can be harnessed for sound educational benefit through this approach.

Evidence

The poster illustrates the technical guidelines and support material developed and the evaluation processes undertaken in the early trials. The poster will also describe the case studies and scenario based exemplars being provided to staff. The technical guidelines, handouts and web resources will all be referenced. The poster invites reflective interaction allowing the user to annotate their personal copy if they choose.

The poster illustrates, using the visual metaphor of the movie director's viewfinder and a movie storyboard, ten models of possible clip deployment, illustrating the teaching practices each supports and suggesting a range of discipline contexts and teaching modes in which this might be appropriate.

References

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Please cite as: Burden, K. & Atkinson, S. (2007). Jumping on the *YouTube* bandwagon? Using digital video clips to develop personalised learning strategies. In *ICT: Providing choices for learners and learning. Proceedings ascilite Singapore 2007*. <https://doi.org/10.65106/apubs.2007.2834>

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