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Lori Widzinski

University at Buffalo, State University of New York, widz@buffalo.edu

Debra Mandel

Northeastern University Libraries, d.mandel@northeastern.edu

Andrew Weaver

University of Washington Libraries Media Center, weevz@uw.edu

Andrew Horbal

University of Maryland, ahorbal@umd.edu

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Media in the Classroom — Connecting, Collaborating, Creating

by **Lori Widzinski** (Head, Multimedia and Music Collections and Services, University Libraries, University at Buffalo, State University of New York; Phone: 716-645-7785) <widz@buffalo.edu>

Media collections and services are reflecting the trend in academic libraries to transition from storage of information to the creation of information. As physical collections are moved to remote storage facilities, library spaces are transforming into new learning environments. Whether these spaces are called media commons, digital media centers, makerspaces, or other locally unique monikers, media librarians and staff are working with academic faculty who are increasingly embracing more experiential and “hands-on” pedagogies involving the creation of digital media. We’ve invited three colleagues to share their experiences transforming their spaces and services to support media creation and use in courses and curricula across academe.

Beginning with a bird’s-eye view, “**Northeastern University Libraries’ Digital Media Commons Delivers Creative and Curricular Services to All**” authored by **Debra Mandel**, Digital Media Specialist, with help from **Patrick Yott**, Associate Dean, Digital Strategies and **Mark Sivak**, 3D Printing Studio Managing Director, exemplifies a prime example of the library collaborating with other campus entities to create a dynamic suite of multimedia services. The array of cutting edge creation technologies and the training support available, all within the confines of the library, is most impressive.

“**Bridging the Analog to the Digital: The University of Washington’s ‘mediArcade’**” by **Andrew Weaver**, Digital and Archival Media Technician for the **University of Washington**

Libraries Media Center, demonstrates the connection between older and newer multimedia materials. Highlighting the strengths of the **University of Washington’s** media collections, particularly their legacy formats, one can clearly see the value to classroom instruction as well as research. Projects from their **mediArcade** encapsulate digital outcomes from analog content, further strengthening the relationship between the library and the teaching faculty.

The creation of video essays is one way the **McKeldin Library** at the **University of Maryland** is engaging students in a fun and interesting way while at the same time using media collections to full advantage. **Andy Horbal**, Head of Learning Commons at the **McKeldin Library**, in his article, “**Toward a New Vision for Media Literacy Instruction**” eloquently describes the evolution of the video essay into library literacy efforts, eventually leading to interest from non-library instructors.

Northeastern University Libraries’ Digital Media Commons Delivers Creative and Curricular Services to All

by **Debra Mandel** (Head, DMC Recording Studios, Northeastern University Libraries; Phone: 617-373-4902) <d.mandel@northeastern.edu>

Renovated in 2012, the library’s Digital Media Commons (DMC) is a vibrant interdisciplinary hub for scholarly inquiry, creativity, and collaboration. In addition to a wide array of reconfigurable furniture and study space, technology-rich collaboration rooms, and high-end workstations, the 10,000 sq. ft. facility offers the campus community cutting-edge resources for audio and video production, 3D modeling and editing, game design, animation, GIS (Geographical Information System), Data Visualization and CAD (Computer-aided Design). These services augment and complement services previously available only in specialized campus facilities with access restricted to faculty, staff, and students associated with specific departments and classes. To provide service to the broadest community and encourage innovative uses of the facilities, the Library staffs these centers with a range of professional staff, coops (interns) and student workers, and also offers a variety of workshops and tutorials.

The DMC Studios is a suite of recording studios designed to produce videos, record music, podcasts and learning objects. It includes a Control Room for recording, tracking and mixing audio sources using an Avid c/24 control surface, as well as technology for switching cameras and controlling studio

lighting scenes. The Audio Studio offers a wide range of speakers, microphones and monitors, drums, a keyboard, guitar and bass guitar. The Video/Photography Studio has a green screen and other color backdrops and a range of cameras and microphones for shooting broadcast quality video. Two sound proofed Media Creation Studios support basic audio and video recording and post-production editing.

Workshops on all aspects of recording, production and editing are held throughout the year. Studios’ staff team with faculty and librarians to provide instruction for media-based assignments across the curriculum. Last spring, for example, the Studios’ Digital Media Specialist collaborated with an English professor, English Department library liaison, Archivist and GIS Specialist to produce video oral histories of Boston community members for a new Writing and Community Engagement class. Studios also hold workshops in video and audio recording and editing, sometimes cooperatively with music clubs.

The 3D Printing Studio provides a full suite of digital 3D fabrication and modeling technologies, individual and group consultation, and instruction, and facilitates project

creation using a range of software, such as: AutoCAD, SolidWorks, Maya, Rhino, ZBrush, Google Sketchup, MatLab, and others. Technology includes laser cutting, 3D scanners and 3D printing methods, including Fused Deposition Modeling (FDM), Stereolithography (SLA), Polymer Jetting, and Powder Printing.

Workshops available to all students range from introduction to 3D printing to scanning and laser-cutting, with opportunities for attendees to create their own 3D objects, such as notebooks and holiday items. All colleges have integrated the technology in the space with course work and curricula. Examples include printed models from a Computer Graphics in Computer Science course, scale models from studio courses in architecture, production of type fonts in an English class, device prototypes from engineering and business courses, and cross-sectional anatomy models for Physical Therapy Department courses.

For more information about the DMC, visit the library’s Website at: <http://library.northeastern.edu> or contact **Debra Mandel**, Digital Media Specialist, at <d.mandel@northeastern.edu>.

Bridging the Analog to the Digital: The University of Washington's "mediArcade"

by **Andrew Weaver** (Digital and Archival Media Technician, University of Washington Libraries Media Center) <weevz@uw.edu>

Since January of 2015 the **University of Washington Libraries** have been maintaining an audiovisual makerspace called "mediArcade." Envisioned as a physical space to interact with the collections at the **University of Washington Libraries** Media Center, the mediArcade has facilitated not just media creation, but a wide range of critical engagement with the non-textual materials held within the Libraries. Through a combination of hardware, software, and staff expertise, the mediArcade is helping to bridge the gap between the Libraries' predominantly physical media collections and the increasingly digital nature of scholarship.

The **University of Washington Libraries** hold not only the largest circulating academic media collection in the Pacific Northwest, but also a wealth of legacy audiovisual items. In soliciting user input during the planning phase of the mediArcade, we realized the

need to create a space that allowed users to engage with our collections as well as their own personal items. Students and professors are familiar with more commonly circulating materials, such as DVDs, yet a large amount of uncertainty exists about how to manipulate them for integration into coursework. A lack of familiarity with format and equipment for archival and legacy formats left patrons unable to use these resources for research and instruction.

For these reasons, the mediArcade seeks not only to provide media creation tools (such as digital audio workstations and video editing software), but also to emphasize support for media reformatting and digitization. In the mediArcade patrons are not only able to play formats as diverse as 16mm film, U-matic and Video Hi8, but are able to digitize them in a variety of methods, running the gamut from a simple mp4 conversion for use in a class project

to archival quality files for research. Media Center staff are available for both one-on-one, as well as group consultations, about using this technology for courses — an increasingly popular service both with students and professors who value having a centralized location for assistance.

One discipline that has been making particular use of the mediArcade is Digital Humanities, where instructors and scholars have been appreciative of the ability to use analog formats in online projects. The mediArcade has been used for seminars on remixing archival materials into music, as well as to instruct on digital preservation through live digitization sessions. With the University increasingly building courses around online learning management systems, professors make heavy use of the mediArcade for creating clips from media items for use in their Web-based lessons.

By providing the means for integration of physical materials in digital instruction, the mediArcade is not only increasing access to the Libraries' extensive collections, but is opening up a wealth of materials for creative and scholarly interaction. Even as the use of legacy formats becomes more difficult, with many newer computers not even having integrated DVD drives, audiovisual materials remain an important component of multimodal instruction. The mediArcade is an important and effective tool in the Libraries' efforts to support a variety of teaching modalities and research initiatives.

Toward a New Vision for Media Literacy Instruction

by **Andrew Horbal** (Head of Learning Commons, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland; Phone: 301-405-9227) <ahorbal@umd.edu>

In 2007, film critic **Kevin B. Lee** began publishing "video essays," which he described as videos that "take footage from films and reconfigure them using editing, text, graphics and voiceover to reveal startling observations and insights, visualizing them in ways that text criticism can't,"¹ on his blog *Also Like Life*. When I started working at the **University of Maryland's** Nonprint Media Services Library (now Library Media Services) in 2013, I knew I wanted to incorporate this technique into our instructional efforts. Traditionally, NPMS's instruction had focused on *finding* audiovisual materials; our new objective was to teach students how to *create something new* from the items in our collection.

Lealin Queen, our Production Specialist, and I initially focused on teaching students the technical skills necessary to complete video essay assignments as efficiently as possible, so that they could quickly move on to the more important task of deciding what critical points they wanted to make. We created an "8-second video essay" module for in-class instruction, whereby students were given an Adobe Premiere workspace pre-populated with a selection of clips from a public domain film (*His Girl Friday*) and a pre-recorded voiceover track that made a critical statement about it.

Following a brief demonstration of how these elements could be combined into a miniature (8 seconds long) video essay, they were split into groups and asked to create one of their own. We continued to support them after class through online tutorials and consultations.

As word spread and other professors asked us to help them develop video-based assignments, we realized that the more we focused on technology, the more our students got caught up in making something that *looked* good instead of something that used audio, video, and images effectively. Using **ACRL's Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education** as a guide, we altered the focus of our in-class instruction to place greater emphasis on being "a critical consumer of visual media" as a means to becoming "a competent contributor to a body of shared knowledge and culture."²

As we created exercises where students "edited" still images into "films without celluloid" (a concept borrowed from early 20th century Soviet film theorists) and made fair use arguments, and as we worked with professors to ensure that their assignments rewarded substance over polish, we made a surprising

discovery. We had thought that beginning to offer media production support was a big leap, but in many ways the transition we were making now was much more revolutionary, in that the assignments and exercises we were developing worked just as well (and in some cases much better) with materials that we or our students found online or created themselves as they did with materials from our collection. This seemed to signal the dawn of a liberating new era in which media librarians are no longer limited by the size of their acquisitions budgets. We can't wait to face this new era! 🐼

Endnotes

1. Lee, K. B. (2013, February 23). "The art of the video essay," a page by **Kevin Lee**, grandmaster of the form. *RogerEbert.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.rogerebert.com/balder-and-dash/the-art-of-the-video-essay-a-page-by-kevin-lee-grandmaster-of-the-form>.
2. Visual Literacy Standards Task Force (2011, October). *ACRL Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/visualliteracy>.