Pointers & Clickers

ION's Technology Tip of the Month

Teaching with Podcasts Learning Team Report

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Introduction

This year's Faculty Summer Institute, co-sponsored by Illinois Online Network and CITES Educational Technologies (http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/institutes/fsi/2006/), for the first time ever featured Learning Teams. As a complement to the normal plenary and concurrent sessions, the Learning Teams provided a kind of conference homeroom for participants with specific interests. In the three Learning Team meetings during the four-day conference, participants spent time reflecting, discussing, brainstorming and creating resources related to their topic of interest and then did a five-minute presentation at the closing plenary. "Teaching with Podcasts" was the topic of one of these Learning Teams.

Learning Team Approach

The 'Teaching with Podcasts' Learning Team took the following approach. In the first 90-minute session the Teaching with Podcasts group shared their experiences and interests in podcasting and spent time brainstorming on topics for the group project. It was decided that the group project would be a series of podcasts highlighting the what, where, when, why, how and who of podcasting. The focus of the group during the two 90-minute sessions over the next two days was to work in teams to produce five podcasts covering these topics. These podcasts are available at http://teachingwithpodcasts.blogspot.com and are linked below.

Podcasting Podcasts

What is podcasting?
Joshua Butcher - WIU, Barbara Taylor - WIU, Barbara Mandel - GSU
http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/institutes/fsi/2006/podcasts/what.mp3

Who is involved in podcasting?
Manuela Sawalha - KCC, Eugene Muhammad - Triton College, Susan Manning - UIUC, David Bell – EIU
http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/institutes/fsi/2006/podcasts/who.mp3

What makes a good podcast?
Kevin Johnson - ION, Mary Hays - UIUC, Julian Scheinbuks - CSU, Roger Runquist – WIU

http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/institutes/fsi/2006/podcasts/quality.mp3
How do I podcast?
Heidi Jung - SIUC, John Bennett - Lakeland CC, Steve McGahan - UN Kearney
http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/institutes/fsi/2006/podcasts/how.mp3

When and why do I podcast?
Norma Grassini-Komara - MVCC, Marsha Nodeen - SCC, Hannah Choi - UIUC, Nancy
Schneblin – JWCC
http://www.ion.uillinois.edu/institutes/fsi/2006/podcasts/whenwhy.mp3

Discussion

In addition to the thoughtful and creative guidelines and tips shared by the learning team via their podcasts, at least a couple of other points were illustrated by the experience. First is the powerful potential of podcasting as a project promoting active learning. Although the five podcasts produced by this Learning Team vary quite a bit in approach, content, format, etc., the one thing all five teams shared in common was their engagement in the task. With the challenge of producing a podcast in less than three hours from start to finish, each team did a great job of planning, distributing the necessary research and other preparatory tasks and then creating their podcasts. In addition to the normal professionalism such a group would have brought to the task, it was clear that the fact that their podcasts would be heard at least during the final FSI show and tell session and then be available online added to their motivation to do the best they could with the limited time they had. Assigning the creation of podcasts to groups of students can be expected to provide similarly enhanced motivation to excel beyond just the necessary work for a grade.

Second, creating podcasts is doable. Of course a lot can go into the right equipment, the right techniques, the editing, etc. but in many cases a creative podcast with acceptable impact can be produced with less. The five podcasts created by this group were created in a computer lab with background noise and distractions and only basic equipment. More could have been done with more time, but the podcasts created by the group make their points and are easy to listen to. Have a listen and see for yourself.