Pixeled Semester 2

Pixeled Roundup

The Pixeled website at http://www.pixeled.org.au has undergone some changes in the past month. Included are more student work examples, resources and a revamped members section. The password for the members section has changed and those who haven't received a new members login can email me at the following address: slbell@tpg.com.au

You might also have noticed a link on the Pixeled website to our blog. Or you can simply type the following address: http://www.pixeledteachers.blogspot.com. The blog is a great way for members to post comments reflecting their experience of teaching multimedia as well as containing links to information and items of interest for the teaching of multimedia.

Pixeled would like to congratulate the following recipients of the Premier's Award for Multimedia: Shaun Johnstone – Warrandyte High, Matthew Gilbertson – Wesley College, Leigh Zito – Forest Hills SC, Blake Taylor – Highview Christian Community College, Liam Hickson – Melbourne High.

Most teachers will be going through exam revision with their students next week. Pixeled have put together sample exam questions in PDF files and you can order them through our website. The sample exam questions take the pain out of having to write up your own. The sample exam questions cover all the competencies and the answers are supplied. You can order them as PDF files and will receive them via email once you've placed an order.

The Pixeled 'Meet the Examiner Day' was held at Melbourne University on the 28th of September. Former examiner Graeme Luck discussed exam technique and strategies for maximising the students' chances of success in the end of year exam. Graeme was followed by Rachelle Mclean who presented several algorithms and asked students how to solve them. Susan Bell then presented a Powerpoint from a former student who'd received a Premier's Award for Multimedia. For those teachers who were unable to attend the seminar, a podcast is available in our members section.

Over the next few months Pixeled will be asking for renewal of membership. As we continue to build up more resources you will find the cost of membership beneficial for discounts on workshops, seminars, resources and the industry dinner. We encourage you to continue with your membership as we can only continue to provide a service with your support.

The committee wishes teachers and students the best of luck in the upcoming exam. Yes, it's hard to believe its that time of year again when we farewell our year 12's and wait anxiously for results. We all hope that the exam will be a fair and sensible one and that all students will have the chance to succeed. As usual there will be a meeting for anyone interested in deconstructing and commiserating the exam. The committee has found this to be a useful and sociable evening. The social event will be held the evening of the exam and the venue will be announced closer to the date. Anyone interested in attending the dinner please send an email to the following address: slbell@tpg.com.au

Adobe Studio 8

Yeah, I know it's old news now that Adobe bought out Macromedia. I mean the giant of graphic design software had to swallow the other giant of computer animation. Money always marries money doesn't it?

So what are the changes now that Adobe has embraced Flash, Dreamweaver, Contribute etc…. in my review in the previous newsletter on CS2 I predicted the death of Fireworks from the Macromedia stock and from the Adobe side - I wouldn't be putting my money on Go Live either. Just about everyone I know uses Dreamweaver and Photoshop anyway so why carry around the dead weight of the other two programs? However, they've both popped up again but I wouldn't bank on them appearing in the next upgrade scheduled mid next year.

But what about Flash you might say, how many changes have they made to that? Surely this must be the holy grail of the Adobe purchase. To answer your question though - are there many changes in Flash 8 and are they enough to upgrade from MX? There aren't too many differences really, apart from the better capabilities of using video.You get plenty more options now for importing video with stand-alone controls. This makes video importing a much easier process but you also have to import it differently depending on the use. For example, if you want to use the video for rotoscoping you have to import video to play in the timeline and not import it to embed. This confused some of my students but we got there in the end.

Another feature of the new package is Flash paper. Now, I've only had a play around with Flash paper and haven't quite yet got the hang of it but from what I gather it is a compression format that allows you to transfer information from all sorts of software packages, including Microsoft and place it within all sorts of documentation. This has made a lot of professional graphic and web designers very excited but I'll need to play around with it a bit more

Philosophical Moments

To be or not to USB - that is the question!

before I can gauge whether it is useful in the delivery of Cert II or Cert III.

Contribute is still bundled with Adobe Studio 8 and we'll have to wait and see what the future will hold for this software package. I don't use Contribute as I don't need it in my teaching but I know that it is quite useful.

So is it worth splashing out for an upgrade from MX to Studio 8? I use video a lot with my students and I've really enjoyed using Flash 8. Will it make students better animators? Of course it won't but you might have fun in the process and we're not talking miracle cures here.

Facts

- The research institute in Singapore have found that the brain structure of the newest generation of human beings, the millenials or Ipod generation as they are sometimes called, have a slightly altered brain structure. Apparently this occurs with lots of exposure to computers and playstations. In particular they've found that the millenials have developed a different kind of flexibility in their fingers from all that shooting and fighting and hands-on controllers. This is fascinating stuff and you can read more about it if you go to the following site: http://www.nie.edu.sg/nieweb/index.do

- The recent Al Gore film, 'An Inconvenient Truth' presented a number of strategies on conserving energy and cutting the carbon dioxide emissions that are currently suffocating the planet. He suggested that when we aren't using our computers we should switch them off so that they don't burn up uneccessary fossil fuels. I've worked in a number of organisations and I know that this just doesn't happen, most computers are left on permanently. We need to rethink our use of computers (along with just about everything else) and lower our greenhouse gas contributions. So do your bit to save the planet and remind your students to turn off computers when not in use.

Pixeled Semester 2

Marian Stoney - caught in the spotlight!

Professional Development

Newbies to VET
November 14

This comprehensive full day course will take new teachers to VET Multimedia through the Certificate II and Certificate III. Experienced Multimedia teachers will share their resources and tips for running a successful multimedia course. Participants in previous years have found that the course extremely useful in their planning of assessment tasks, marking and general understanding of delivering competencies.

Pixeled Conference
December 7

Held at Lab 3000 in Collins Street and presented by experienced teachers of VET Multimedia a variety of hand on workshops will be offered for modules covering the Cert II and Certificate III course.

For a brocure please go to our website.

Committee Members Corner

Each semester Pixeled highlights a member of the Pixeled committee to give you some background on people in our organisation. This month an interview with Marian Stoney - Multimedia Teacher at Eltham High School.

Q: **How did you become involved with the teaching of Multimedia?**

A: I did graphic design at RMIT in the early '80s as a mature age student (really showing my age here!). That was in the days before computers had revolutionised the design industry – we did all our layout by physical cut and paste, all our photographic images were done in the darkroom and the closest we got to multimedia was a slide presentation. But I also have a Maths Science degree, and I have quite a logical analytical side to me as well, so I was fatally attracted to computers when they got down to PC size. I did have a bad experience with them back in 1973 when I had to do a six week computer unit in first year uni – we had to enter all our code onto hundreds of cards using a hairpin to punch out the holes, then the cards were put through the mainframe overnight. Every single time the printout would come back "error", and I would have to re-do the cards. No wonder I failed that unit…

Anyway, I basically taught myself PhotoShop and introduced it into the VCD classroom at Upfield Secondary College with four PCs. When I moved to Eltham High School where I currently teach, I got the chance to set up VET Multimedia – which I jumped at. I did a lot of PD in Flash, Director and CorelDraw, and got a head start on scripting because we couldn't afford the 3D animation software, and scripting was the alternative in the last package. My maths background does help me a lot with ActionScript.

Q: **How did you become involved in Pixeled?**

A: That's really taxing my memory – I feel like I've always known the other members of the committee! I first met other teachers interested in forming an association at one of the VCAA days held at Moonee Valley Racecourse, and it seemed to progress from there. Probably what galvanised us and unified us most was getting together a letter of protest to VCAA after the killer 2004 Year 12 exam.

Q: **Where do you see the subject of multimedia heading over the next 5 years?**

A:. Mobiles are the centre of people's lives with all the convergent technologies – we will be designing mobile content in the multimedia classroom in the next year or two. The challenge is to scale down the visual design and still make it work – a bit like when we went from record covers to CDs… remember? (Maybe not.) Screen resolution will have to improve dramatically, and keyboards will become obsolete, which is good as I can't type for peanuts.

Q: **What have you found to be the greatest challenges facing Multimedia Teachers?**

A: Definitely the huge workload, especially in the early phases of a new course. My children must have thought I

Pixeled Semester 2

was chained to the computer every night and weekend. The record keeping is demanding too. The mismatch between the Training Package and VCAA is always a challenge to negotiate – the lack of a study design makes things somewhat vague, although VCAA has gone some way towards defining things better.

Q: **What role do you play in Pixeled?**

A: I am an ordinary committee member, some days more ordinary than others! I produce the printed publications such as brochures and order forms, and participate in group tasks such as writing sample exam questions and planning PD activities. I run PixelEd PD sessions on Flash and scripting and anything else where I might have something to offer. And don't forget my role of soaking up all the advice and support of the other committee members.

Q: **What is your favorite piece of technology?**

A: I'm old-school, and I love the printed page. My favourite new toy is an Epson R1800 inkjet printer which prints A3 edge-to-edge in glorious colour. It will also print CDs and continuous roll paper. It uses a drip-feed ink system instead of cartridges, which works out at about 30% of the normal ink costs to run, and you can see when the ink bottles are getting empty. It has seven ink colours, RGB and CMYK plus a matte black and a photo black, and a gloss optimiser which gives a beautiful smooth finish. The pigment ink is supposed to be light-proof for two hundred years, but I don't think I will be able to test that claim out unless technology really advances.

Q: **What is the most rewarding part of teaching Multimedia?**

The buzz the kids get out of it, for sure. Making games with Cert III students is the best thing ever – in spite of the frustrations of debugging script, I never hear a word of complaint or boredom. And I am always amazed at the creativity they show. I take a very broad line with setting design briefs, to allow students to follow up their own interests where possible, and the results can be extremely quirky and unique

Out and About with Vice President - Stuart Bush

GameMaker

On the 21st of September I attended a Game Maker PD held at Westall Secondary College. The session went for 3 hours and was introduced by Roland Gesthuizen who spoke about Web2 and the advantages of introducing Game Programming into the curriculum.

Tony Forster ran the session and took us through the basic operations of Game Maker. We were each given a space invaders tutorial to run through and were encouraged to have a play with Game Maker and think about solutions to suggested problems within the gaming environment.

I really enjoyed the session but I did feel that there were a few attendees that were very nervous about introducing GM into their classes and especially how the "girls" will take to using GM.

I can see GM being used in a number of different ways in multiple subjects and assignments. If anyone is interested in more info, please visit: http://www.freewebs.com/schoolgamemaker/ (Official GameMaker Website) and http://www.freewebs.com/schoolgamemaker/ (Tony Forster Schoolgamemaker Site). I'm sure Tony would be interested in answering any questions you had about GameMaker.

PCEDUG Meeting

On the 5th of September I attended a PCEDUG (PC Education User Group of Victoria) Meeting held at Kew High School. PCEDUG has been running for twenty years and started as a mutual support group for people using IBM JX computers.

It's free to join and anyone can attend the meetings. There are usually four meetings a year and is made up of a Mixture of classroom and IT teachers, ICT Managers, computer technicians and network managers.

What's Happening

The Pixeled newsletter is sent to members each semester. Anyone interested in contributing to the newsletter, including reviews, information and articles can send an email attachment to the following address:

slbell@tpg.com.au

or our postal address:

**Pixeled Multimedia TeachersAssociation
PO BOX 477
Clifton Hill
3068**

The evening I attended was hosted by MMT (Multimedia Technology P/L) and Commander. Michael Dyson from MMT spoke about different technologies within the school IT environment. There were a number of very cool products they had on display including the Panasonic ToughBook. OMG, I jumped every time they grabbed it by the screen and whacked it back onto the table it was sitting on.

I unfortunately couldn't stay for the entire meeting but after the presentation, Peter Burgess spoke about Kew High School and its progressive move into Information Technology.

If I ever become an IT teacher, I know I will be keeping PCE-DUG on my list of favorites.

Sue Bell reports on the ACEC CONFERENCE - Cairns 2006

I had the good fortune to attend the Australian Computers in Education Conference held in Cairns over the 1st October to the 3rd of October. There were more delegates than usual this year and partly the reason could be explained by the location - I know it was one of the incentives for my attendance.

 I ran a pre-conference workshop on interactive comics at the Cairns High School on the Sunday prior to the conference. Then I was free for the rest of the conference to attend seminars and discussions. One of the more interesting seminars was on the publicity and support generated for attracting girls into IT. Various initiatives for attracting women have been put in place by most states within Australia and it's interesting to see how each one is going about trying to attract girls. There has been some success but at this stage it is still minor and I'm sure new ideas and schemes will be forthcoming.

Another interesting discussion was presented by Gary Stager, a fairly familiar face at IT conferences. His message was that ICT was no longer inspiring within school curriculum as computers were being under utilised and under resourced. I can't argue with him there. Until schools train teachers to use ICT properly and give them the skills to create exciting and original lesson plans then the computer will continue to be used as a glorified word processing machine.

There were discussions on mobile phone technology in the classroom, digital storytelling and a range of demonstrations by teachers on their current use of IT. The usual vendors were also present selling interactive whiteboards and software. All in all the location was nice but there really wasn't any new ideas or inspiring lesson plans but it was worth going just to network and meet a range of people from Australia and New Zealand.