

Introduction to Collaborative Webmaking

Integrating Webmaking into your Curriculum



1 Introduction

Web Literacy is quickly becoming the fourth literacy, yet it's often not integrated into the classroom. This sample curriculum was created to help teachers integrate Webmaking into their standards based curriculum through a project based learning method that uses the Web as it's platform.

Special knowledge about the web is not required to run a version of this curriculum in your classroom. The only thing your students need to be able to do is open a browser and use a mouse.

2 Learning Objectives

The goal of this curriculum is to help learners plan and develop a collaborative web project and think critically about the subjects and topics you choose.

Students will learn how to work together to solve problems in a digital environment. Webmaker skills will be presented and developed and learners will develop a base understanding of terms and processes used in Webmaking. At the end of the project, students should know a variety of collaborative tools that they can use to express themselves on any topic, academic or other.

The Wordpress framework plays a major role in this curriculum and students will learn the basics of the blogging system and how to use certain tools within it. Technical competencies surrounding the design process are also covered in this curriculum. Tips and tricks on the strategic planning and organization of content will help students think critically about the choices they make when creating.

2.1 Methods

The ability to create a collaborative project using the Web as the communication, planning and development platform is only attainable through practice. For this reason, a project based method is the best choice.

At Mozilla, we believe that learning is an active process. Many of our programs are built with constructivist theories in mind. This curriculum supports knowledge construction as opposed to knowledge reproduction.

The first step in opening the door to Webmaking is the perceptual understanding of collaborative web practice. This curriculum will help students develop an interest in technical and communicative skills as their desire to participate in the landscape of the web grows.

Since this curriculum proposes a great deal of self-organized collaborative work, the students will need to organize their time effectively. They will have to navigate the flexibility of their own project time line in combination with the class project deadline. Time management, group cohesion and cooperation are other lessons this curriculum aims to transfer.

3 Content and Flow

3.1 Time Requirements

Because coming to a decision or answering a complex question can take longer when digital communication replaces face-to-face communication, this course is broken up into four phases that span a total of six weeks. The four phases are meant to run in sequential order and the content is prepared in a way that should leave plenty of time for the successful development of a full fledged project. Furthermore, the timing is such that the priorities and wishes of the learner can be worked in.

3.2 Phases

3.2.1 Introduction Phase

In the first phase, the project is introduced to the students. This phase can take place in the classroom or as a synchronous, virtual video conference. Choose a specific theme or topic that you want your students to explore and modify the project outline below to fit your topic.

Then, separate students into groups. Keep the groups under five people per group to ensure maximal participation. Try to put students together that have similar interests, but varying competencies in digital media and the subject you're basing the project around. Give your students some tips on how to work together. Talk to them about respecting each others opinions, division of labor, Netiquette, turn-taking, etc.

Next introduce the project and answer any questions your students might have about your requirements. Think of innovative ways you can use peer assessment to inspire students to maintain a good work ethic, and explain these assessment procedures to your students.

You might want to give some quick crash courses on setup and basic usage of the collaborative tools you plan to use over the course of the project.

3.2.2 Group Dynamics Phase

After the introduction phase, give your students some time to get to know each other. Trust is an important issue in group work, so this phase is designed to circumnavigate typical problems and get group members cooperating despite the difficulties that come with working collaboratively through communication technology.

3.2.3 Project Concept Phase

This phase gives the groups two weeks to determine their project theme and prepare a presentation for the instructor and the other groups.

3.2.4 Design and Development Phase

The last three weeks of the project are for designing and developing. Groups will learn Wordpress. You should give a thorough intro to the platform to help students get started.

4 Technology

Video conferences, Etherpad, Chat and Email are recommended media. In today's web landscape there are hundreds of solutions for communication tools, and everyone has his or her favorite. All of these tools have pros and cons. One of the learning goals is the ability to effectively collaborate, so allow groups to choose the tools that help them develop that ability.

5 Supervision

In classical forward facing classes, the students have a passive role and the instructor has an active role. This dynamic is the absolute opposite in this project. You'll

act more as a project manager and allow students to explore their project theme and the communication tools on their own.

Lastly, have fun with it! Just provide your students with motivation and support and see what kinds of amazing ideas they have.

6 Hack the Project Outline

The next section of this curriculum is the sample project outline. This outline is meant to serve as a jumping off point for you. We hope that you will ignore pieces that you don't feel apply and expand areas where you feel your students need more guidance.

In short, we hope that you will take it, hack it, run it in your classroom and then let us know how we can improve the base curriculum.

Project Outline

You and your group will collaborate to create a Wordpress site that:

- introduces each member of your group
- critically and creatively explores a theme related to Filmmaking
Example: „The History of Media“
- presents a project narrative
Example: „This project serves to introduce you to the History of Media. From the printing press to the digital revolution, this project explains the history of mass media. In our approach we... Every mass media...etc“
- justifies the project narrative
Example: We chose this theme because...
- presents detailed information on this theme from the perspective of the group as well as personal perspectives and thoughts on the development process through blogposts, demos and remixes.
- shows an active collaboration through comments and discussion functions
- clarifies important aspects and concepts related to filmmaking
- allows simple social sharing
- uses text, graphics, photographs, animations and other forms of media that are self made or have a Creative Commons license and properly attributes all sources.

Assignments

1: Ice Breaker

As a group, start an Etherpad (etherpad.mozilla.org). Each member write a haiku in the Etherpad, then comment on each other's haikus.

2: Virtual Bash

Just hang out with your group and have a social hour over video chat. Try Google Hangouts or use Skype

Conferencing. Or meet up in person after school for an hour.

3: Make Decisions

Discuss in your group:

- who the moderator is (the moderator is responsible for sending weekly updates about the group work to the instructor)
- what expected reaction times are (what's the longest amount of time a group member has to react before the moderator „tells on“ them?)
- when your groups weekly chat/video chat appointment is
- which tools your group will use to communicate
- why different perspectives are valuable
- the voice of your project (serious, humorous, formal, informal, etc)

Document your decisions in an online document. Write up how you came to your decisions and compose a synopsis of the discussion help over varying perspectives. Share this document with the instructor.

Assignments

1: Brainstorming the Theme

Discuss with your group possible theme ideas. Decide on one and create the first version of your project narrative. Each group member should compose a few paragraphs about the collaborative process. These paragraphs will later form the first blog post that will be put into Wordpress.

2: Sketch a basic schematic and Make Design Decisions

In this project you will build a fully functioning website.

Designing for your AUDIENCE:

You need to know who your target audience is. A target audience is a group of people that have something in common, and it greatly influences many design aspects.

Think about the type of people you want to engage. Make notes about things like age, family status, computer experience and interests or hobbies.

Ask yourself:

- How old are these people?
- Do they have a lot of family obligations?
- Do they have a particular career path?
- How often are they online?
- What are their hobbies?

Write a general description of your user.

The target audience is important because it helps to answer a bunch of design questions you're going to have.

Age range: Could impact color scheme, text size, and language used.

Level of computer experience: Impacts viewer's ability to interact with the site. What are they used to in terms of site design?

Hobbies/Interests/Pastimes: May help to gear and guide the taste of the site as well as point views to other resources within these interests that they enjoy.

Content

Write all the content bits and pieces out on little pieces of paper. Then, categorize the pieces. This exercise will give you a logical global navigation (and subnavigation if you have lots of content).

There's no one way to organize content. You need to have a feel for what your content is, and then categorize pieces together. Don't forget, it's easier to rearrange pieces of paper than electronic data.

This process doesn't just help the organization of content, it also helps you begin to think about production resources you will need and a time plan.

Navigation

If you've worked through the content section, you'll know that Navigation relies quite heavily on the content. Organizing content will reveal logical global and

sub navigation. What comes first? Create a hierarchy for your content.

The site map shows exactly how many navigational items you'll need as well as the hierarchy of the pages. The creation of a site map will also help you eliminate irrelevant content and know what you need to produce. It's a good idea to take your time with this because without it, it will quickly become confusing where a particular piece of content "lives". A simple and clear navigation structure is important so that your users don't get confused or frustrated.

3: Write your Group Profile

Make profiles for each member of the group as well as a group profile. Be creative! A profile doesn't necessarily have to include text!

4: Create a Presentation

You'll be giving a presentation about your concept to the instructor and the other groups. This should include:

- the draft project narrative
- the motivation for selection of your theme
- a description of your project's target audience
- the hierarchy of your site (structural tree)
- a plan for using page elements (what kind of logo, headlines, graphics etc)

Prepare a 10 minute presentation. You can make a slideshow, pdf, video, etc. You can even create an online presentation depending on the skills your group members have.

Assignments

1: Prepare Wordpress

Go to [Wordpress.com](http://www.Wordpress.com) and create a new blog. Make sure that each group member has an admin account. Discuss and decide on a Wordpress template that you want to use. Decide which plugins you will need.

2: Divide up the Production Tasks

Make a list of all the content that needs to be produced. Decide who is responsible for what.

3: Development

Put your content together and place it into your Wordpress. If you need help with Wordpress, check out the library of tutorials: http://codex.wordpress.org/WordPress_Lessons

Etherpad

What it is

Collaborative document writing/editing with chat

Setup

Go to etherpad.mozilla.org

Tips and Tricks

Go to etherpad.mozilla.org/TYPE-THE-NAME-YOU-WANT and give your Etherpad a memorable name. As with all online tools, the lack of connectivity can affect Etherpads ability to function properly! At the end of a large collaborative writing session, export your pad just so you have a hard copy, you know just in case.

Watch out for

the spinning beachball of death. Sometimes if you copy and paste a body of text into Etherpad, a hidden character will cause the pad to fail. If the etherpad won't load for people you try to share it with, this is likely the cause. It's an annoying bug (and we're working to fix it).

Ideas for Interactive Homework

Since Etherpad allows multiple people to type at once, and records each persons contribution as a color, it's a great tool for both the development of group work as well as assessment of individual contributions. Have students collaboratively write a research paper, script or synopsis.

Super Awesome Feature

The time slider. Watch the evolution of a particular Etherpad by scrubbing the time slider!

HTMLpad

What it is

Collaborative HTML writing/editing with chat

Setup

Go to htmlpad.org

Tips and Tricks

Go to htmlpad.org/TYPE-THE-NAME-YOU-WANT and give your HTMLpad a memorable name. As with all online tools, the lack of connectivity can affect HTMLpad ability to function properly! At the end of a large collaborative coding session, export your pad just so you have a hard copy, you know just in case.

Watch out for

the learning curve. HTMLpad is for writing HTML collaboratively. It's an awesome tool, but after you've got your page, you'll probably want to upload the code to your own server. Learn more about coding, servers and ftp at <http://p2pu.org/en/schools/school-of-web-craft/sets/webmaking-101/>

Ideas for Interactive Homework

Have students collaborate to create a simple webpage for your topic.

Super Awesome Feature

The time slider. The time slider. Watch the evolution of collaborative coding by scrubbing the time slider!

Wordpress

What it is

A content management system that can do almost anything.

Setup

You can set everything up for free at wordpress.com

Tips and Tricks

Choose Appearance>Themes and search the thousands of themes to create a beautiful Wordpress site that works for you. Check out http://codex.wordpress.org/WordPress_Lessons to learn about wordpress.

Watch out for

Plugins. There are thousands of Wordpress plugins that allow you to do everything from setting up an online store to auto tweeting a message at a given

time. Plugins are awesome, you should try them out, love them, use them. Just be aware that some plugins conflict with each other.

If you install a plugin and your Wordpress starts acting funny, you're probably experiencing this kind of conflict. Deactivate plugins one by one and find the culprit! Wordpress is a robust framework.

It's fairly intuitive, but to harness the power of Wordpress, you should really make a commitment to learning it. Take your time, practice, learn together with your students, and know that there are TONS of tutorials out there.

Ideas for Interactive Homework

Wordpress can serve you and your students in a million different ways. Using wordpress can allow you to store lesson plans, exercises, ideas, student work, etc to be accessible to anyone anywhere anytime. Don't want to/can't have a public site? No problem, with Wordpress you can also have private sites that users log into. Students can interact with each other over the site, trade ideas, images, videos, etc. Wordpress can serve as the infrastructure for entire course.

Super Awesome Feature

Impossible to list one. So much awesomeness in this free, open source tool.

Google Docs

What it is

Collaborative documents, presentations and spreadsheets right in the browser

Setup

Go to <http://documents.google.com>. Click "Create New Document".

Tips and Tricks

Google Docs is like Office in your browser, you can format text, insert images, draw diagrams.

Watch out for

having to log in. To give access to your students, without them having to log in, you'll have to make the document editable to the public. Make sure you back up important documents!

Ideas for Interactive Homework

Have students collaborate to create a presentation using Googles presentation tools

Skype

What it is

Internet Phone service and Video Chat Client

Setup

Go to skype.com and download the Skype Client. Choose a skype name and password and then search for your students or colleagues and add them as contacts

Tips and Tricks

Choose Chat>Add People to have a multiperson chat.

Watch out for

faulty connections. Every once in a while some wires get crossed and the people you're trying to talk to sound like they're living in a bubbleverse. Hang up, try again, usually the problem corrects itself.

Ideas for Interactive Homework

Skype is a great way to have an online discussion. Have a conference call with your students to check in on how they're doing with a project. Have one on one meetings to discuss group dynamics. Use Skype to show and tell ideas. Suggest Skype for communication during group projects. Combine a Skype Conference call and an Etherpad and take notes of the call.