

Faculty Spotlight



- School of Education faculty since 1989
- Teaches graduate level literacy courses both online and face to face
- Consultant for several school districts
- Co-authors a column in the New England Reading Association Journal
- Lesley University representative to the Massachusetts Association of College for Teacher Education (MACTE)
- Treasurer for the Massachusetts Association of College and University Reading Educators (MACURE)
- 2008 Lesley University Impact Award winner

Audio Feedback in an Online Course

Mary McMackin, Professor
School of Education

Introduction

Mary McMackin developed and taught her first fully online course in the Summer of 2008. After teaching the course for the first time, she felt that the text-dense content was challenging for slower readers and those who had trouble with reading comprehension. She decided to include audio components in the course to add variety to the sessions and create an alternative means for students to obtain the course content.

Timeline

Mary learned this new skill in the Summer of 2008 and started using it in her course that Fall.

- In June, Mary attended a three hour Podcast Workshop offered by eLIS. That night she created her first podcast.
- In August, Mary recorded 4 podcasts to add to her Fall course
- In October, Mary sent her first audio feedback podcast to her students

Equipment

- Headset (\$20 - \$30)
- Audacity Software (free)

Process

Mary now uses audio in three different ways in her course:

- To deliver announcements to the students
- To provide feedback to students' discussion board postings
- To deliver pieces of text-heavy content in audio form

Mary has developed a process for recording feedback for students. As she reads the students' submitted assignments, she takes short notes on a spreadsheet. She then records an individual audio track for each student based on those notes. Mary typically records the audio once or twice and rarely has to edit the files. Each podcast is around 3-4 minutes. Whereas last semester it would have taken 20 minutes to type feedback to one student, Mary is now able, in the same amount of time, to provide 10 times as much feedback to 3 students.

Outcome

This semester, Mary sent audio feedback to students for three assignments. She did not provide any technological support for students and has had only positive feedback. Students reported back to Mary that the podcasts were easy to access and enjoyed the experience of a human voice in the course. They also enjoyed the variety of learning methods.

Next Steps...

The next time Mary teaches her course, she plans to use audio to complement and enhance the content, rather than just reading what is already there. She would also like to start using more visuals, including short videos explaining more complex topics, and letting students see the face of the instructor.

You Can Podcast Too!

- Keep an eye out for one of our Podcast Workshops – our training page is updated regularly with new offerings! <http://www.lesley.edu/elis/programs.html>
- Read the *Educause Guide to Podcasting*
- Contact elis@lesley.edu for a special one-on-one training session

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