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Center for Instruction & Research Technology (CIRT)

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Center for Instruction & Research Technology (CIRT)

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FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: CAPTURING STUDENT ATTENTION WITH ANIMATED CHARACTER VIDEO
Ronald Lukens-Bull, Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Listen Now   AUDIO MP3

When Teaching Online Seminar (TOL) participant Dr. Ron Lukens-Bull was redesigning his *Peoples and Cultures of the World* course for online delivery, he wanted to introduce the course to students in a way that would allow him to express his personality and introduce students to the overarching themes of the course. He considered shooting a short introductory video, but decided that for him, a different kind of video would better fit his style and capture students' attention. A self-described geek, Lukens-Bull found xtranormal.com, a moviemaking website for creating animated videos.

The service allows users to provide a script and then select characters and a location. The animated characters speak your transcript and the resulting movie can be produced in a number of formats. You can also add various actions and animations to a movie including specific character motions, facial expressions, and sounds. Because the video is generated directly from the text you provide, once you become accustomed to the interface, production is quick and easy. There are two editors available, one that is online and another that is desktop-based. The desktop editor provides some additional features, such as more than two characters. An update to the online editor allows the addition of voice recordings in both editors.

Lukens-Bull created two characters, Andy Throw and Polly Gee (get it?) to introduce his course. The setting is a talk show with those characters, who are students in the course. In the first five-minute episode, they discuss the course content, procedures, assignments, and the instructor. In a humorous way, Andy Throw and Polly Gee discuss what can be expected in the course and how to obtain help. Lukens-Bull plans to produce additional episodes of the Andy Throw and Polly Gee Show to be used periodically during the online course.

Xtranormal.com allows users to create a free account that comes with a set number of credits. Credits are used to access additional characters, locations, and other features. Xtranormal.com will give additional free credits to educators, so use your .edu address when emailing them.

Since creating the introduction movie for his online course, Lukens-Bull has produced six other videos that he is currently using in his traditional courses. Titles include *Larry King Interviews Jesus on How Muslims see Him* and *Symbols, Myths, and Rituals*. Feedback from students has been positive. With the use of "Video Syllabi" instead of talking through the syllabus on the first day, students pay attention. Further, there are fewer questions later in the term about the contents

of the syllabus. Lukens-Bull hosts the videos on his YouTube channel. To see more, visit **http://www.youtube.com /user/rlukensbull** . If you are interested in exploring this tool to create material for one of your courses, please stop by to talk with us.

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TEACHING ONLINE SEMINAR AND DISTANCE LEARNING AT UNF
Deb Miller, Director **deb.miller@unf.edu**
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This past summer, 20 UNF faculty members completed the Teaching Online Seminar (TOL). They each redesigned a traditional course for online delivery via UNF's Blackboard Learning System. This is a record number of participants for us since beginning the program in 2006 as a two-day seminar for five faculty members. Please see **this page** for a complete listing of participants and redesigned courses. The intensive seminar now covers pedagogy, course design, instructional strategies, communication strategies, and online assessment. Participants examine course objectives and learning activities for the selected course and complete a conversion/redesign process in which they align objectives with learning activities and assessments. It is a powerful experience and participants consistently comment that it has changed the way they teach forever; not only online, but face to face as well.

This has proven to be an effective model, but the times, they are a-changing. The number of distance learning courses at UNF has steadily increased over the past five years. In Fall 2005, we had 39 distance learning course sections offered at UNF. In Fall 2011, we have 107 distance learning course sections being run, with total enrollment of 3,258 students. The recent reorganization in Academic Affairs has provided new leadership for distance learning and other academic technology. CIRT now reports to Dr. Len Roberson, Graduate School Dean and Assistant Vice President for Academic Technology. This elevation of the conversation about distance learning is already providing exciting new opportunities that position CIRT to better support faculty. This summer Dr. Roberson and I visited other schools in the state university system to learn about how they have supported and administered their distance learning programs. The University of West Florida and the University of Central Florida, in particular, have been doing this for a long time and have excellent reputations, so we were excited to learn from them and came back with many great ideas and best practices.

The Distance Learning Committee will take up issues relating to program development, course review, and faculty training this fall in order to recommend policies that will enable UNF to continue to offer courses and programs that employ the best pedagogical practices based on existing research literature and are compatible with the highest level of student learning, interaction and engagement.

With the implementation of a distance learning fee at UNF, there are now funds available to support and incentivize the development of quality distance learning courses and programs. We will be working hard to provide greater access to training and support for faculty who wish to teach online. We anticipate being able to greatly increase access to the Teaching Online Seminar and other training opportunities that enable faculty to develop and deliver high- quality distance learning courses. We will also be adding additional staff dedicated to assisting faculty with course development and delivery. We are exploring other ideas such as developing a cadre of distance learning GTA's that could help faculty manage discussion boards and quizzes in large course sections. I would love to hear from faculty who are teaching distance learning courses about the kinds of support and resources that they think would be most helpful.

Online learning, whether as an enhancement to a traditional course, in a hybrid model, or fully distant, will continue to grow at UNF and we are excited about the opportunities and challenges that brings, and about working with you to provide the best learning environment possible to UNF students.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Blackboard Safe Assign
Date: Friday, September 30, 2011, 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Location: Building 51 (Social Sciences), Room 1201
Participants learn about SafeAssign, the plagiarism detection service available in Blackboard. Explore the following features of SafeAssign: SafeAssignments, Direct Submit, Originality Reports, supported file types, viewing and grading submissions, copying SafeAssignments into other courses and making the SafeAssign tool available in a course.
RSVP to **cirtevents@unf.edu**

iPad Webinar - iPad: Effective Use in the Classroom
Date: **Tuesday, October 4, 1 – 3 pm**
Location: Building 1 (JJ Daniels Hall), Room 2800 (President's Conference Room)
The iPad offers endless possibilities for teaching and learning, but that doesn't mean it is always an effective learning tool. A faculty member's purpose for using the iPad is the most significant factor in determining successful use in the classroom. Join us for this online webinar to discuss a framework for thinking about iPads in the classroom, followed by local discussion about implications for our campus.
Webinar Brochure: **http://www.academicimpressions.com/PDF/1011-ipad-teaching.pdf**
RSVP to cirtevents@unf.edu

Mobile Video Production: iMovie on the iPad
Date: Wednesday, October 5, 2011, 10 am – 12 pm
Location: Building 1 (JJ Daniels Hall), Room 1701 (UG Studies Conference Room)
The first hour of this session features demonstration of mobile video editing and publication using Apple's iMovie software on the iPad 2. Participants who own an iPad2 may wish to purchase and install the iMovie software ($4.99) prior to the workshop in order to follow along with the exercises. Others may attend to learn more about this portable production platform. During the second hour, CIRT staff will be available for an extended question and answer session, and individual troubleshooting. CIRT has a limited number of iPad2's with iMovie available for project checkout.
RSVP to **cirtevents@unf.edu**

Blackboard- StudyMate and StudyMate Class
Date: Friday, October 7, 2011, 1:30 pm – 3 pm
Location: Building 51 (Social Sciences), Room 1201
With this companion to Respondus, discover how to create Flash-based activities that engage students without having to learn Flash programming in this hands-on workshop. StudyMate imports items from MS Word files making it easy to create interesting, interactive activities from existing content. Features include spell check, graphics interface, equation editor, quick copy wizard, and publication directly to Blackboard. StudyMate Class allows instructors and students to create learning activities within a Blackboard course from glossary terms, facts, and questions. Once information is input into StudyMate Class, students choose activities based on their preferred learning style.
RSVP to **cirtevents@unf.edu**

Clickers Best Practices
Date: Wednesday, October 19, 2011, 10 – 11 am
Location: Building 1 (JJ Daniels Hall), Room 1701 (UG Studies Conference Room)
This session is for instructors using clickers in their courses as well as those interested in learning more about this tool. Participants will discuss current use, common challenges, best practices and share ideas for extending the value of this tool in their course. In particular, we'll focus on the attributes of "great" clicker questions and discuss example questions.
RSVP to **cirtevents@unf.edu**

Blackboard GradeCenter Advanced
Date: Friday, October 21, 2011, 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Location: Building 15 (Mathews), Room 1104
This hands-on workshop introduces several advanced features available in the Blackboard Grade Center including: calculated columns (weighted, average, minimum/maximum), dropping lowest scores, smart views, grade history, and uploading and downloading grades. Previous participation in the Beginning Grade Center session and/or understanding of the topics covered in the Beginning Grade Center session are recommended.
RSVP to **cirtevents@unf.edu**

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DIGITAL THINKING: NEW MEDIA CONSORTIUM SUMMER CONFERENCE
Dave Wilson, Coordinator of Educational Media, **david.wilson@unf.edu**
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This summer I was fortunate to attend the New Media Consortium (NMC) Summer Conference. The NMC is "an international not-for-profit consortium of learning-focused organizations dedicated to the exploration and use of new media and new technologies." The summer conference is their biggest event. People in roles similar to mine meet to present interesting projects, discuss ideas, and socialize. The big topic this year was app development for mobile devices, especially iOS devices (iPad, iPhone, and iPod Touch). I attended a couple of workshops on that topic. One of these introduced me to PhoneGap **http://www.phonegap.com/** . PhoneGap allows you to build mobile apps with HTML 5 and Dreamweaver, tools that I'm already fairly comfortable using. I plan to teach myself how to create simple apps in the coming months. I see the ability to develop simple apps as a natural evolution in our capacity to support faculty projects.

Another idea that has potential is using an iPad 2 or iPod Touch as the hub for a **mobilemediacreationkit**. Penn State is using iPod Touch kits for their **MobileMediaPilot**. These kits are ideal for field work. They are portable, have good battery life, storage capacity, and they provide the capability to produce short video and audio clips. The clips can then be published to sites like YouTube and Vimeo. CIRT has iPad 2s with accessories available for checkout. If you are interested in experimenting with it as a mobile media production tool please let us know.

Simple augmented reality apps were the topic of a few of the presented posters. You may remember that I was very skeptical that this technology would be useful this soon when I reviewed the **2010 HorizonReport**. Well, I was wrong; some of the projects were exceptional. I was especially impressed by the Aurasma app **http://www.aurasma.com/** "which enables you to overlay videos, audio or interactions over all sorts of images in the real world." Basically, it turns a mobile device into a lens that shows you extra digital content related to real world objects and places. Imagine being able to record video commentary for a page in a book. When your students used their phone to look at the page they would see your commentary.
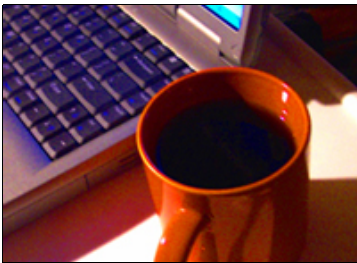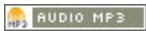
Please let me know if you're interested in any of these topics. I'll be happy to discuss them with you.

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BEST PRACTICES ONLINE: USING COMMUNICATION TO BUILD A RICH, ENGAGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
Julie Carter, Coordinator of Instructional Design, **julie.carter@unf.edu**
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Not only can the instructional design of your online course significantly increase student engagement and learning, but your choice of communication methods with your students can increase their efficacy, motivation and learning. Through my instructional design experience and support of online faculty members, I have seen many instructors communicate consistently with students at the beginning of a term to build a rich learning environment. As the semester continues, instructor-student communication usually tapers off and instructors provide summary comments reflecting on each learning modules' learning activities, assessments, outcomes, etc. Sometimes, an instructor's communication is needed to redirect students' application of knowledge in a learning activity, such as an online discussion, blog, project wiki, or assignment paper. Please note that this communication does not have to be limited to text since CIRT has a variety of audio and video equipment that you can use to quickly develop demonstrative and engaging audio and video clips to instruct your students.

There are ways to communicate with students other than corresponding directly. For example, you can communicate with your students indirectly through your course design by including redundancy in your course. For example, in Dan Richard's TOL (Teaching OnLine) workshop presentation, he advocated this principle of redundancy by suggesting that instructors include course links to other course elements throughout their course. Examples would be a link to the course syllabus in the assignments section or a link to the quizzes section from an announcement. By the instructor "communicating" in more than one location where vital course documents are located, the students' search time for course content can be reduced, and instructors can focus more of their time on faculty/student interactions instead of toward support of Blackboard course tools. Here is a **link** to more information for adding course links to your course.

Speaking of supporting course tools, it is helpful for instructors to communicate to **students which web browsers are supported by Blackboard** in order to prevent instructors from receiving numerous emails from students regarding problems with opening files, editing wikis and blogs, and successfully completing tests. Another helpful link for instructors to communicate with their students is the link to the **Blackboard Technical Support Module for Students**.

An additional method for instructors to communicate with students is through the use of grading rubrics. In online courses, it can be difficult for instructors to effectively communicate their expectations for the quality of work required for course deliverables. Therefore, a grading rubric can clearly communicate the learning goals as well as objectively display the criteria by which each student's performance will be graded. Here is a **link** to some sample higher education grading rubrics.

Another communication method that instructors can implement to advocate continuous learning with students, even after the course is over, is the sharing of discipline-related websites and social media, such as twitter and RSS feeds. Twitter is a free online social networking service that you can use to communicate and stay connected with your friends, family, colleagues, and students through the exchange of text-based posts, "tweets", of up to 140 characters. Currently, there are several UNF professors who share their twitter accounts with their students, so that the students can have continuous access to news related to their course and can "keep on learning" after they complete the course. Here is a **link** to sign up for a twitter account . In generic terms, a RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed collects web content that is of interest to you and shares this content in one place (i.e. reader website) for you, instead of you going to various web sites to read and search for this content. See **this page** for a much richer explanation of an RSS feeds. There are numerous UNF professors who share their RSS feeds with students via their online courses.

In summary, it is advantageous to both the students and instructors to implement a wide assortment of communication

methods.   Not only will a stronger rapport exists between the instructor and students, but the learning environment will be more engaging and appropriate for our 21st Century learners. If you haven't seen **this popular video** from Kansas State University which summarizes important characteristics of students today - how they learn, what they need to learn, etc.), I recommend it.

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BLACKBOARD NEWS: NEW TIMER AND STUDYMATE CLASS
*Erin Soles, Coordinator of Instructional Design,* **esoles@unf.edu**
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Blackboard assessments include a *Set Timer* option which records student completion time on an assessment. When an assessment is timed, the scheduled amount of time for the assessment is included in the assessment instructions and each student's elapsed time is recorded in their assessment attempt and may be viewed from the Grade Center. Service Pack 6 includes a new option in the *Set Timer* feature: ***Auto-Submit***. With *Auto-Submit*, instructors may set an assessment to save and submit automatically when the designated amount of time expires. Instructors may also elect to turn the *Auto-Submit* feature off to give students the option to continue their assessment attempt after the assessment time expires. Instructors should note that auto-submitted assessments in Blackboard display an exclamation mark rather than a score once submitted and instructors must review the attempt in order to change the "!" to a score in the Grade Center.

StudyMate Class is a new tool available in Blackboard which allows instructors and students to create learning activities and games from glossary terms, questions and facts. With StudyMate Class, instructors can create collaborative StudyMate Class projects and individual StudyMate class projects for development of self-study materials. Once StudyMate Class projects are added to a Blackboard course, students and instructors may add content to the project that is used to generate learning activities including: Fact Cards, Fact Cards Plus, Flash Cards, Pick a Letter, Fill in the Blanks, Glossary, Matching, Crosswords, and Quiz.
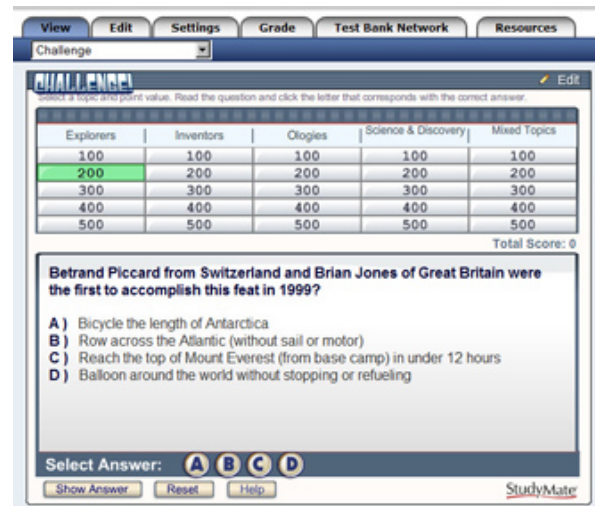
McGraw Hill Connect
Over the summer, we tested McGraw-Hill connect Building Block. This tool is meant to seamlessly integrates McGraw-Hill's Connect, a web-based homework and assessment platform into Blackboard Learn. The tool did work without error, so we have not been able to implement. We will continue to work with the vendors, Blackboard and McGraw-Hill with the goal of implementing in the future.

Bb World News
I attended the Blackboard Word 2011 conference this July and as in years past, it was a wonderful opportunity to attend sessions and network with colleagues and vendors. I presented a poster session titled "One Size Does Not Fit All: Meeting the Needs of Students via Several Podcast Solutions" with Dr. Jonathan Pabalate from the School of Nursing in the Brooks College of Health. We outlined the various podcasting options available at UNF and focused on the unique solution used by the Nurse Anesthetist program at UNF. You can view the Prezi presentation that accompanied our poster **here**.

The Blackboard World conference does a great job of offering numerous sessions on a wide range of topics and this year I focused on sessions related to integrating social media and third party tools into Blackboard. In addition to the client-led sessions, Blackboard also uses the conference to hold sessions in which they disseminate information on their future plans and recent acquisitions. Some of the most exciting news came from the Blackboard Product Roadmap session in which Blackboard talked about upcoming Service Pack upgrades and their development plans for the next year. There are three Service Packs expected to be released within the next year, two of which will contain fixes (SP 7 and SP 9) and one which will contain new features (SP 8). Some of the new features to look for include automatic re-grading of assessment questions, new reporting options, HTML Editor improvements, course relationships and the use of the name *Blackboard Collaborate* in place of *Elluminate* which is in line with Blackboard's acquisition and merging of Elluminate and Wimba last year. The entire BbWorld 2011 Corporate Keynote may be viewed **here** and the Prezi is available **here**.

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APP REVIEWS:JUMP START YOUR iPAD WITH APPSTART AND SWYPE FOR ANDROID
Mike Boyles, Coordinator of Graphic Design, mboyles@unf.edu
Listen Now

App Start

With more than 425,000 third-party apps available for the iPad, it's difficult choosing the right one to get started. I recently came across a beautifully designed app that greatly enhances the experience with the iPad. It has four pages (yes, four, make sure you scroll down on the home page to find the others) that are full of helpful tips. **AppStart** takes a fresh and fun approach to teach you how to become more familiar with your iPad and apps, and turn your device into a powerful tech tool. And no, this is not your ordinary boring instruction manual.

This app should be preinstalled on every iPad. It's an abundance of information that is informative, educational, and a visual treat as well. It explains the basic functions in detail, and suggests many helpful apps that you might not know existed. It not only filters through the many apps out there, but also provides you with step-by-step instructions on how to utilize the apps themselves.

Designed in a magazine format, it starts off with the basics, suggesting the top 10 apps you absolutely have to download before doing anything else, and then progresses into more advanced topics like how to replace your laptop with your iPad and how to print with no strings attached. It also instructs you on how to set up your email, create folders to organize your apps, take screen captures, sync your iPad to your iTunes to select and play music and podcasts from anywhere in your home, and so much more. AppStart offers information on the various ebook readers, along with details on "cloud" storage for your files.

Each article is carefully written so even the most basic user is able to follow along. Articles feature lots of informative screenshots so you know exactly what to look for, thorough instructions, fun tips, and app icons that are direct links to the App Store so you can easily download them. There are suggestions for apps on almost every subject including News, Reference, Notes, Finances, Organization, Home Theater, Magazines, Planning, Games, Sports, Social Networking, Shopping, Hardware for your iPad, and many more.

Navigation of the app couldn't be easier, allowing you to go at your own pace and read only what applies to you. Tapping on any of the lead images will bring up an article in full-screen. Swiping up and down will allow you to quickly scroll through entire articles, and swiping from left to right — as you would when unlocking your iPad — allowing you to go back to the main page. It's that simple. AppStart also saves the last page you were on, so you can leave at any time and come right back to what you were previously reading.

While it's a pleasure to use this app, the best part of all is that it's free. It's definitely worth the price! I would recommend this free app to all new and tenured iPad users!

APP INFO
Link: *http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/appstart-for-ipad/id408984648?mt=8*
Cost: *Free (for now)*
Platform: *iOS*
Requires: *iOS 3.2 or later*
Current Version: *1.0.1*
Size: *12.6 MB*

Swype for Android, from Guest Reviewer Erin Soles

Swype is, without a doubt, my favorite app on my Android phone (Droid X). Swype is a keyboard application which allows fast and easy input of text with one continuous finger or stylus motion. Check out this **video** from Swype to see a demonstration. Swype allows text input at speeds of over 40 words per minute because it does not require you to hit each letter accurately but rather uses an input algorithm to predict the word traced over the keyboard. More information on Swype, including features, specifications, and many more videos is available on the **Swype website**. The latest version of Swype Beta is available to download **here** and may be installed on any Android phone (as long as Swype didn't come pre-installed with the phone). To learn more about how this technology developed, see *The Man*
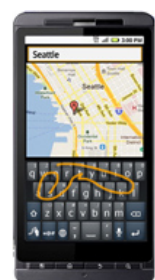
Who Reinvented the Keyboard -- Twice.

APP INFO
Link: *http://beta.swype.com/*
Cost: *Free*
Platform: *Android*
Requires: *Android 2.0 and Later*
Current Version: *2.5 pre-installed on Android devices*
Beta: *Version 3.25 available for all Android devices without Swype pre-installed*
Current Version: *1.0.1*
Size: *12.6 MB*

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UNF SURVEY TOOL UPGRADE

Vovici, UNF's online survey application, will be upgraded to version 6.2 on Sunday, Sept. 18 between 5 a.m. and 9 a.m., during the scheduled maintenance window. The upgrade introduces a redesigned interface that streamlines the survey creation process. During the upgrade, faculty and staff will not be able to access Vovici. Survey respondents attempting to answer a survey during the upgrade will see an informational web page suggesting they try again after 9 a.m. Surveys created before the upgrade will function normally after the upgrade.

On Sept. 21, 22, and 29, there will be one-hour classes that will introduce faculty who currently use Vovici to the changes in the new version. For more information or to register for 'Introduction to the New Version of Vovici', visit **this page**.

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This newsletter is a publication of the
Center for Instruction & Research Technology at the **University of North Florida**.
Deb Miller, Editor

Please direct any comments or questions to **cirtlab@unf.edu**

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