

IPAD ENGAGEMENT – TEACHING DESIGN BY CONNECTING CONTENT TO TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

This paper explores the pedagogy of teaching design using discipline specific texts and iOS/iPad platform. More and more of our communications are mediated by new technologies and platforms. As a result design education and practice need to perpetually adapt to those new conditions. Educating the future communicators and shapers of media requires not only shift in content but also shift in media environment. Most importantly requires shift in pedagogy. Merging design related content with mobile publishing platform offers an opportunity to not only engage content in a deeper way but also to explore new ways for creation and distribution. During a course of a semester multimedia design students in the American University of Sharjah created iBooks for the Apple iOS/iPad platform. In the process they not only engaged relevant content but also explored publishing on the iPad. As a result every student created a complete, fully functional iBook experienced in its intended format and platform and in publish ready format.

Keywords: “media design”, iPad, iBook, publishing, pedagogy

1 INTRODUCTION

Teaching design in the Middle East presents its challenges. While pedagogy and subject matter mirror, for most part, a US or European approach, it has the additional challenge of English language instruction. Studio based learning is at the center of the media and visual design pedagogy. Students are asked to develop projects based on self-generated content or assigned one from the public domain. One typical outcome would require shaped content as a magazine or a book format. The availability of iPad/tablet platform affords new opportunities for enhancing and even evolving traditional pedagogy. This case study offers a model for blending design content, design process and mobile tablet environment in which the charted course of interaction with content is as essential as the resulting artifact.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Tablet computing and its role in the educational space have already attracted the attention of many researchers and instructors alike. Multiple pedagogical perspectives have also created a variety of digital explorations and considerations for a learning environment. There have been various approaches to the use and methodology of incorporating tablets into traditional course activities. Embedding mobile technologies within learning environments has established itself as distinct approach in teaching and learning – mLearning. The parallels and divergences of analog and digital have suggested a close examination of printed books versus eBooks and their experience via iPad. Research conclusions identify opportunities as well as potential pitfalls [1]. Some studies also consider possibilities for collaborative experience for creating content, where emphasis is on pedagogy and learning outcomes rather than the novelty of the technological intervention [2]. Studies of student learning have varied in their scope and depth, however the production of meaning and the evaluation of meaningful output have been assessed through diverse set of inquiries [3]. Despite identified difficulties and limitations with the use of mobile platforms for education, it is nevertheless accepted that they will play a substantial role in the classroom of the future [4]. The studies of iPad use have emerged from many areas around the world. Middle East educators have embraced the use of tablets for their flexibility and integrative potential. The considerations for use have also centered on the relationship between mobile applications and their ease of access [5].

3 METHODOLOGY

This eight-week long pedagogy outlines the scope, process and outcomes of blending design content with design artifact via digital iBook. The model was explored during the Spring semester of 2013. The group of students of this study included total of ten female and five male. All were junior Multimedia Design majors. The assigned requirements included a selection of three (3) articles from a list of ten (10) design related discussions, advice, lectures and related articles publicly accessible. Before selecting they had thoroughly familiarize themselves with the material and internalize its meaning. Following that, they narrowed the selection to articles with which to design. Furthermore, they were required to add a self-generated content responding to the key aspects of the chosen articles. The final outcome was an iBook previewable on an Apple iPad. In addition to substantial design considerations and development, students used digital production tool (iBook Author) and an iPad for testing and previewing purposes. The final assignment outcomes included a complete iBook publishable on iBooks store and PDF Process Book where they were instructed to outline, internalize and reflect on the process and making.

4 FINDINGS

After briefing students on assignment parameters and process of progression they began by familiarizing themselves thoroughly with a given list of articles. They evaluated them based on their interests and even anxieties about the future.

“By selecting specific articles that relate to design clichés, I wish to share the knowledge I acquired with my peers to contribute to a generation of educated and cultured designers. Through my E-book I hope to clarify an issue that faces many emerging and young designers”.

Others took a more expansive view of their making and considered the opportunity at hand and their response to it.

“I wanted to make a book that I myself would read.”

During the initial two to three weeks, students investigated the content, its meaning and possible presentational approaches. In addition to selecting articles, they considered the nature and scope of their response and possible design decisions. The most technical stage of the book production required the use of iBook Author application. This was their first encounter with this specific tool. Prior to design implementation a short period of the acculturation was required for effective production of the final outcomes. All students had already gained fluency in Adobe InDesign so the adaption to a new tool did not cause any identifiable problems. Moving from tool mastery stage to in-depth digital production culminated with the finalizing of an iBook. Multiple intermediate iterations involved experimentation and continuous testing.

“I tried working with articles of different scopes, and experimented enough with the software, I decided to start over. I simply did not feel comfortable working with the previous subject. So, I went and took another look on the articles and this time I had my mind set on something specific”.

Many articles contained advice to young designers, which found natural audience in students considering not only their current learning but also the future that awaits them.

“I decided to make the Ebook contain guidelines and advices from successful designers. Let alone these designers have published their work and experienced the outside world. These three articles contain very useful information and relate to each other in order to benefit the reader as a new upcoming designer”

As they manipulated content based on fundamental design principles, their physical interaction with the meaning prompted them to not only manipulate appearances but also to contemplate their future professional application. Most importantly they considered the emotional meaning of the various voices represented emerging from the text.

“I was so happy to see that ‘Do Public Schools Kill Creativity?’ was on the list of articles

that we could choose from. This seemed so important to me, and I felt that my story could help instill the passion in the project and I could make something that inspired others”.

Moreover they embraced the meaning of the advice as multiple guidelines of dos and don'ts of professional success thus transcending the mere production of a digital artifact into note taking for the future.

“To me, interaction was on a level where I feel like the author is communicating to me. I felt like genuine interviews would push that interaction through and make the viewer feel like they're part of a discussion”.

The resulting outcomes were complete eBooks, which were demonstrated via Apple iPads. The final books were reflected on by other design instructors and evaluated on visual and conceptual merit. A key advantage was that the final outcome, with the support of iBook Author and iPad demonstration, presented students, critics and potential future audience with the a well shaped outcome.

5 CONCLUSION

The case study outlines a method of engagement and production centered on a platform with an ever-rising popularity and robustness. The proposed process of creating eBooks demonstrates that there could be multiple pedagogical outcomes within a single design assignment. It offers students a chance to not only practice creating design artifacts but also intimately engage with content and its meaning. By strategically selecting instructive design texts, and requiring personal response to the chosen writings, students were forced to not only engage visual design, but most importantly contemplate the substance of presented advice and believes. While the student sample of fifteen (15) is rather small to draw larger conclusions, nevertheless the produced outcomes indicate a promising direction of organically merging design education pedagogy with technological engagement.

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