New Media Working Group

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Of the seven (7) steps or points presented for analysis by Mara Saule, so far we have managed to and touch upon #1 (the definition/scope) slightly, skip #2 (vision for use and support) completely, and roughly accomplish #3 (snapshot of current facilities and roles).

An ongoing initiative like this is something to be taken more seriously. I feel strongly that this vital subject could be more effectively served by integrating the unrepresented user base at this juncture. The current members represent primarily the "supply side" of the equation. Their long standing contributions to A/V use and computing technology has been very substantial; there is, however, great and continual change occurring on the front lines of technical interactive media creation and usage methodology.

To resort the order, # 6 - "Who should be engaged in clarifying the issues?" - it is somewhat obvious that the following should be defining the direction of facilities and support for New Media at UVM:

* In-house professional media developers in tune with industry practice/direction.
* Representative faculty who teach the use of contemporary tools/methods
* Representative student(s) at a high level in use of contemporary tools/methods
* Mainstream faculty or dept. head(s) with midrange needs and time/energy/skills

To be sure this discussion happens in a healthy manner, these parties' experiences and outlooks should be driving
the agenda. A major side benefit is that this is the only way to encouraged movement in concert and save the University money by assuring that regressive competitive practices, that tend to overly isolate resources, are minimized.

UVM has several areas where advanced media tools exist and skills are developing. Many departments will be glad to share their progress and, without giving up individual systems entirely, work together to map out more effective universal support strategies that will allow them to ultimately minimize their internal build-ups.

It is imperative that the importance of New Media's place in any advanced Information Technology and Public Relations system be recognized. There is enormous tension in the demands of staying technically relevant whether in education or the world students need to be prepared to function in.

New Media has taken a back seat, been ill defined, and either overly touted or under recognized, largely because those ultimately in charge of it were intimidated or simply overwhelmed by it. There is no shame in this, but the persons who can handle the stress of rapid change and the constant battle for compatibility and teachability, do so by managing,

not only their personal learning curves, but more importantly, their perceptual and emotional intelligence.

Those involved on intimate terms with these technologies ask only to be involved at a level where they can lift everyone's burden with timely decision making power. If they are going to suffer this process for whatever magic it will yield, they would just as soon "build their own cross" based on experience and logic - would mostly all like to work together if the incentives and outcomes can make sense.

I have been looking into a few areas:

- Film studies just acquired 5 new digital cameras that are held for them by Media Services, and a new Mac Final Cut PRO editing station on 3rd floor Old Mill (Champlain just put in 30 Dual Processor Mac Final Cut PRO work stations)

- Am attempting to reach Art Dept. Film/Video adjunct Walter Ungerer to assess their new lab's progress and their support ideas.

- RETN (Regional Educational Television Network) is seeking interns to work on New Media. Do we have students groomed for this type of opportunity?

- We are struggling in CTL/DMDL to cope with near constant requests by faculty who want to take output from common desktop application (e.g. PowerPoint) or consumer A/V media ("home" video) and make these work in new innovative delivery modalities on portable formats and the web properly for those who will consume the material.

- There has been a lot of chatter about "electronic portfolios" but we are lucky to be able to elevate student's skill to cope with making simple web content.

- I listen intently to descriptions of the inhibitions, motivations, and challenges of overworked academics who's departments do not have built-in media infrastructure/support. They rightfully desire some linear paths through the process of leveraging their work, and understand the value of digitally mastering content to gain the efficiency - but the systems they need are largely lacking.

In Summary:

What is called for, in my opinion, is a New Media Roundtable consisting of the above mentioned constituencies. This body could make the best recommendations, serve the whole community's interest effectively, and help make the administration's work easier. It would spread a culture of adaption and realism.
It could deal with a range of "hard" issues: e. g. simple lack of the FLOATING HEAD tripods in Media Services (needed for decent video acquisition), and "soft" issues: promote an understanding of how to realistically build in LEAD TIME - and the importance of LAYERED DIGITAL LITERACY skills in when/how projects are approached; keeping <u>tools, information (content), and skills in balance</u>.