

Intro

Hello my name is David Sinfield and I am a graphic designer with over 20 years of commercial experience and I now teach graphic design on the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at Auckland University.

Notes 1

What is becoming more and more alarming is the reduced amount of contact time we have with the students. We are seeing increased class room numbers. And having to deliver the same content.

Graphic design is very much a tutor intensive learning environment. By this I mean that the students have more tutoring time than say a student studying business or law. The graphic design student requires a continuing amount of feedback and cannot be taught the practical side of design in a lecture type theatre scenario.

With ever increasing budgetary restraints the learning environment for the graphic design student is being pressurized to sit in the same mould as other education programmes that operate on a more financial economical basis.

Notes 2

Q. So how can we keep our standards of excellence and still provide the level of learning under these conditions.

A. We have to re evaluate how we teach and adjust our way of contact with the students.
the high teaching standards.

in short we have to te

Notes 3

In early 2012 I started this project of how to establish ways of delivering content, marking, and improving on the learning environment for the student.

The project involved Graphic Design Staff working as a team to introduce new technologies in learning and teaching.
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1. The use of digital drawing monitors. These are the Wacom Cintiq monitors normally used for architecture/engineering but not usually in the graphic design field.

2. A series of recorded downloadable lectures. Producing filmed tutorials and publishing these online. These types of lectures are often difficult for the students to follow and take notes at the same time.

3. An interactive ePortfolio website An area for sharing ideas outside of the classroom environment

Due to time restraints in this presentation I shall focus on the third item as it has the biggest impact on this project.

Notes 4

One of the purposes of this project was to engage in out-of-class communications that would enhance the learning and teaching. This was seen as engaging with an on-line ePortfolio area that was specifically tailored for the students so they could communicate with each other and the tutor of the class. There was also the need for the students to up-load their designs, to obtain critique from their peers and tutors whilst away from class. This would have several benefits as feedback could be given outside of class making the precious time in class much more productive. It also creates a healthy collaborative design community.

To this end several existing ePortfolio platforms were considered and some indeed have been tested and used. Social media sites such as Facebook, Tumblr, Wordpress, Twitter, Blogged, etc. Public sites such as these although good in content and functionality did cause several concerns from both tutors and students alike. These concerns were such as, copyright and placing images in the public domain would then open areas of ownership. The type of files and sizes were also a consideration and did not want to be inhibited in any way.

There has also become a level of mistrust with existing social media sites such as Facebook and we are seeing students opting out of using sites like these.

Notes 5

So what are the benefits?

On each brief the students are asked to provide a work book that they have worked on which shows their thinking processes and research on how they developed the final design. This is a process that doesn't necessarily work in practice as the students often produce this after they have finish their project, in other words they are fudging it.

This is a vital process in developing their designs as the student needs to be able to show the tutor the progression of their designs. By producing these interim progressions through the on line process it will make for better student integration and should also aid in the final marking of these projects as the tutor will not be faced with cart loads of books to have to mark. It will also help in giving vital feedback to students throughout the project.

So it can be said that a continual critiquing process takes place.

Notes 6

To that end we looked at what was on offer within the university.

In the beginning of this project we looked at Maraha and it was trialed by the group of students and tutors, but seemed complicated in its functionality and usage for the graphic design students and staff alike.

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So one size just doesn't fit all and sites like Mahara may be fine for some people and programmes, but for students dealing with visual content and wanting to upload their images this just is not suitable.

In light of these findings it was established that we would need to tailor make a specific ePortfolio site, as nothing 'off the shelf' would do.

Therefore an ePortfolio area was specifically designed for the graphic design students.

Notes 8

What did the students want from this ePortfolio site?

- The students wanted an area where they could easily up-load their images

- The ability to also upload moving image easily
- Working in a safe environment that they control
- The students wanted an exclusive area that was only for that particular class
- An area where their up-loaded images could be shared with peer and tutor critiquing
- To be able to give comments on the work
- The students wanted this area to be fun and user friendly
- A area that was simple in its aesthetics and functionality

Notes 9

What did the tutors want from this ePortfolio site?

- The need to easily see the images and associate them against the student
 - To be able to comment on the images
 - The ability to send email from this area
 - The uploading of finished projects and work works (PDF files)
 - Being able to critique work, give feedback and to grade work
 - Date stamp against the file
 - Contact details of the students so easily contact can take place
 - A area within the site so resources can be up-loaded
 - A news section for quick notes such as a bulletin board
 - The ability for the tutor to have editing access to this area

Notes 10

At the end of the year I interviewed a small number of the students to talk about Arden ImageBlog and to ascertain the outcomes from our new site. I wanted honest answers to see if we had created a functioning site, which could be used by other groups within our department. To achieve this I wanted a comparison on the two areas.

Firstly I asked the students what they thought about Mahara.

Notes 11

I then asked the students about Arden ImageBlog area in comparison to Mahara.

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As you can see from the looks on their faces they immediately acknowledged the liking of this.

As the students mentioned in the video clip it only took them a day to understand the site and start working with it as a posed to trying to get them to use Mahara over three weeks.

Notes 13

Then the students were asked did they enjoy using Arden ImageBlog

Notes 14

Conclusion to the interview

As the students mentioned in the video clip it only took them a day to understand the site and start working with it as a posed to trying to get them to use Mahara over three weeks. This is because we make it much more functional and intuitive.

Mahara in its complexities and it is worth noting that the students will simply not engage in an area such as Mahara if it is too difficult to use. As educators I believe that we have to make the educational learning pathway fun and easy accessible as possible. By making it fun and as easy as possible the students will learn and be much more creative in a model like this.

Also the students

Please don't let me discourage you from using Mahara it may be perfect for your needs.

Being part of a faculty that has an array of differing educational programmes and students, there is always going to be differing needs required by programme and students alike. This is always going to be a challenging requirement especially when trying to accommodate a resource area that suits all. It has been made evident that the student's requirements for areas such as these will require a different approach and style as well as

functionality.

So one-disciplines requirements will be completely different from another. So why would we expect one ePortfolio site to suit all? By the pure nature of the differing students and the way they think has to be taken into consideration when embarking on such a resource as this ePortfolio site. Graphic design students think in images, colour, shapes and form not in numbers, forms of written texts. Therefore the comparison between these different students needs another approach to construction and functionality.

At the start of this research project and the experimentation of existing ePortfolio sites it soon became apparent that students will not willingly engage with areas such as these if it is too difficult to use, they simply give up which, is totally the opposite to good learning and teaching and what we are trying to establish.