The Importance of ePortfolios:
Teaching Graphic Design through an ePortfolio environment both in and out of the classroom environment

Project Outline

Graphic design continues to be a growing area within education and mainstream industry, especially in emerging economies of third world countries. The trends within these third world countries, both at education and industry levels, are somewhat lacking from a creative 'thinking and doing' prospective, but do prosper from the use of new technology investment from an industry and government level. Whilst here in New Zealand we have the creative teaching ability and excellent industry knowledge, but we suffer from the investment in technologies that other countries have to offer to their students. Working with CfLAT at AUT (Centre for Learning and Teaching, Auckland University of Technology) and the investment made, I see this as a fantastic opportunity for our department to engage in these technologies and offer our findings back into the curriculum thus making the department much more knowledgeable in this area and making our students more prepared in their future careers.

Within this project it involves graphic design staff working as a team to introduce new technologies into learning and teaching approaches, with associated curriculum development. These technologies will focus on the use of ePortfolio/Blog sites for interacting with the students, digitizer monitors and other hardware and software for both in-class instruction, and the preparation of reusable resources e.g mini-lectures on topics relating to their course (Toppin 2011). This will enable teaching material to be available to students for independent learning in on-line and downloadable formats and will enable teaching staff to concentrate on developing concepts, while allowing students to develop as independent, engaged learners. This project is seen as the development of the graphic design discipline curriculum and the development of teaching and learning approaches. It seeks to engage staff in the use of these technologies to build both discipline and teaching and learning expertise. A key aspect of the project will be the adoption of new approaches involving staff in an active, team-based exploration of new approaches. It is expected that long-term changes will be more successfully embedded than through individual development approaches. Long-term resources will be developed that will be made available across disciplines, as appropriate.

Graphic Design is a discipline that is undergoing major changes in its associated technologies while underlying design principles may remain fundamentally intact, new digital technologies and publishing mediums provide new challenges (Glissov 2006). In a recent review of the Graphic Design degree programme at Auckland University of Technology, the reviewer forecast that print would be a minor output within five years. Substantive changes are also occurring in approaches to teaching and learning, with new technologies offering new opportunities.

Digitizer Monitors/Tablets

The use of the Wacom Cintiq tablets has meant that we can research into, and evaluate the changing trends of graphic design and therefore discuss with industry how the shape of graphic design should be implemented in the future. We have introduced new curriculum initiatives within the illustration paper to maximise the usage of these new drawing tablets.

The images shown below have been produce by students using the Wacom Cintiq Digital Drawing Tablets.

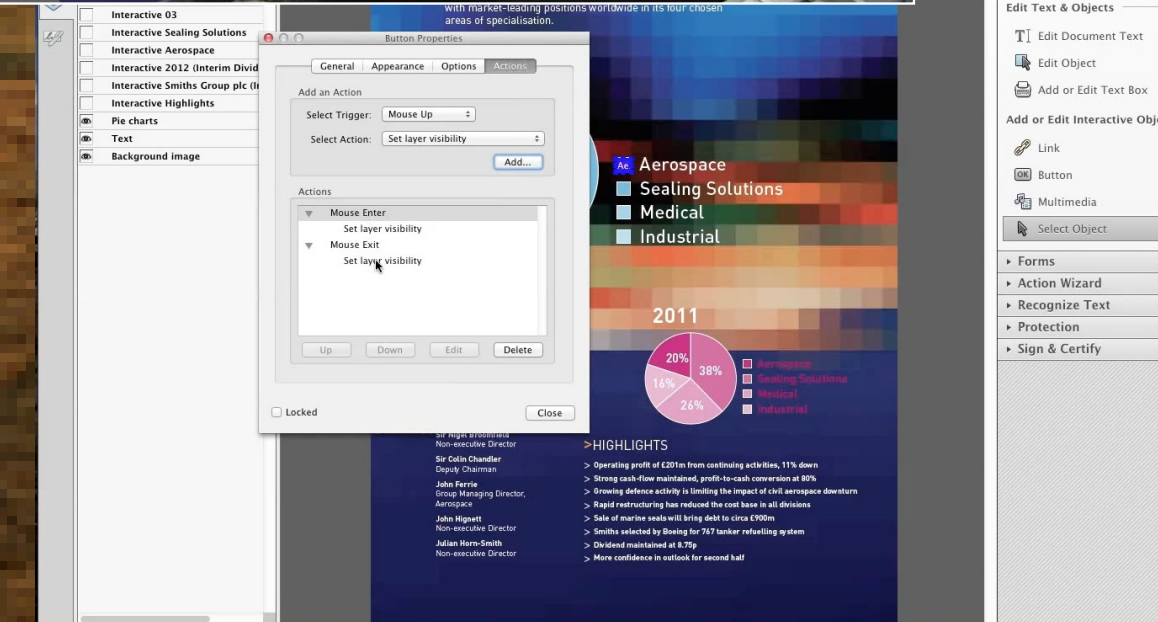Image created by Student — Fuad Alqais.

Image created by Student — Trojan Schwenke.

Image Blog — ePortfolio/Blog area

One of the purposes of this project was to engage in out-of-class activities 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 that 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 they will be working on, to ascertain 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 fulfilling and productive and also creating a collaborative design community.

Image created by Student — James Field.

Screen shots showing examples of the mini lecture series available through the image blog area.

Image created by Student — Ian Milligan.

Mini Lecture Series

There are many learning resources available today that can be accessed through on-line sites such as YouTube, Google, Linda-dotcom etc., but how do we know as educators that our students are accessing the right areas and getting the right information. As part of the graphic design curriculum, presenting a series of lectures to the students that outlines particular content that is needed within its syllabus.

• Tailor making the videos to the exact content so they can be presented without fear of confusion or incorrect content.

• The presenter of the lectures has a familiarity with the students so the students can relate to the presenter on the videos.

• By uploading to the ePortfolio/Blog website and offering the videos on a secure network the students are able to view them at the leisure on a repeated level.

Scan this QR code to view the interview with the students talking about their involvement in the Image Blog ePortfolio site.

Scan this QR code to view the sample video on the Interactive Tutorial.

Background image by student — Ezra Whittaker-Powley.