

Favorite Tech Tools (April 29, 2011)

It's the third annual favorite tech tools sharing session. We'll take a look at some favorite tools and share ideas for using them in instruction. The focus is on "low barrier" tools that are free (or cheap) and easy to try out and use. This handout (and previous Favorite Tech Tools handouts) are available on the Instructional Technologies wiki:

http://courses.durhamtech.edu/wiki/index.php/Tools:Tech_Things

Featured Tools

SoftChalk

<http://courses.durhamtech.edu/wiki/index.php/Tools:SoftChalk>

SoftChalk is a powerful, award-winning e-Learning authoring solution that lets you easily create and share engaging, interactive content. If you can use a word processor, you can create interactive learning experiences with SoftChalk. Designed for educators and content experts, SoftChalk allows you to spend your time developing course content, not learning how to use complex software. And, content developed in SoftChalk is portable for use in virtually any learning management system or on any web server. Create. Engage. Share. "If it's not easy, it's not SoftChalk."

Durham Technical Community College owns a site license for SoftChalk that allows the product to be installed on any college-owned computer. Under the terms of the license, full and part-time employees of the college may also install SoftChalk on their home computer(s) for their own use.

Digital audio recorders

<http://www.durhamtech.edu/faculty/reference/media/media.htm>

Media Services has digital audio recorders available for short-term check out to faculty and staff. Instructors can use these devices to record audio lectures for posting on Blackboard. These recorders create MP3 files, which are compressed and ready for web delivery. After recording, transferring your audio files from the recording device to your computer is as easy as using a USB drive (no software to install!). For more info, contact Mweshi Ngandwe in Media Services at x1609.

Dropbox

<https://www.dropbox.com/>

Dropbox is a file hosting service which uses cloud computing to enable users to store and share files and folders with others across the Internet using file synchronization. Dropbox is a free service that lets you bring your photos, docs, and videos anywhere and share them easily. Never email yourself a file again!

VoiceThread

<http://courses.durhamtech.edu/wiki/index.php/Tools:VoiceThread>

VoiceThread is "a tool for having conversations around media." An instructor can post a collection of media – such as images, documents, PowerPoint slides, or movies – and then students (and the instructor) can comment. Participants can choose how they want to comment: by typing text, by recording audio, by webcam, by telephone, or by uploading a file.

Online Tools and Resources

Instructional Technologies wiki

<http://courses.durhamtech.edu/wiki/>

The Instructional Technologies wiki provides resources for instructors and students who are using instructional technology at Durham Technical Community College.

Delicious

<http://www.delicious.com/>

Delicious is an online bookmarking tool that lets you save, organize, and share links to your favorite web sites and online articles. Keeping your bookmarks on Delicious (instead of in your web browser) means they are with you wherever you are (at home, at work, on a laptop, iPad, smartphone, etc).

Karen McPhaul uses Delicious to save articles for her online class and also articles of personal or professional interest. To see her bookmark collection, visit:

<http://www.delicious.com/mcphaulk/>

Google Calendar

Several instructors (Brent McCardle, Steve Leadon) are using Google Calendar to create a visual representation of the class schedule. The course calendar can be “embedded” in Blackboard and provides a visual reminder to help students keep up with assignments, due dates, etc. This video shows how to embed a Google Calendar in Blackboard: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=au-9FUOUKak>

Khan Academy

<http://www.khanacademy.org/>

The Khan Academy has a collection over of 2,100 videos and 100 self-paced exercises and assessments covering everything from arithmetic to physics, finance, and history. Khan Academy offers a free world-class education for anyone anywhere.

Kerry Cantwell and Marianne Williams are impressed with the number, variety and quality of the videos available, especially Math the related videos.

Poll Everywhere

<http://www.polleverywhere.com/>

The fastest way to create stylish real-time experiences for events using mobile devices. Poll Everywhere is free for audiences of 30 people or less. Paid plans are available for larger audiences.

Steve Leadon is using Poll Everywhere in two of his smaller BIO classes. He provided this feedback about the tool: Generating the "polls" was easy to do. In his Bio169 class offered at Orange County, students seem to like the immediate feedback that shows up on the screen. One minor issue is that once the students who know the answer start answering correctly, some students just follow along. I also tried it with my Bio271 class in Orange County. This is a slightly older group who did not take to it as well. This was mostly because some of the students do not bring their cell phones with them or do not pay for the texting feature on their phones. Only about half of the class would end up responding. Consequently, I stopped using it with that class. One size does not fit all!

TED: Ideas worth spreading

<http://www.ted.com/>

TED (Technology Entertainment and Design) is a global set of conferences owned by the private non-profit Sapling Foundation, formed to disseminate "ideas worth spreading." It started out (in 1984) as a conference bringing together people from three worlds: Technology, Entertainment, Design. Since June 2006, the talks have been offered for free viewing online, under a Creative Commons license, through TED.com.

The Top 100 Tools for Learning 2011 List

<http://www.c4lpt.co.uk/recommended/2011.html>

The Centre for Learning and Performance Technologies (C4LPT) site was set up by Jane Hart as a free resource site on the use of new technologies for learning and performance. It has now become one of the world's most visited learning sites on the Web.

weebly

<http://www.weebly.com/>

weebly is a free and easy tool for creating websites and blogs. weebly is not infested with ads and is a great tool for non-techies who want to build their own websites without using HTML.

Lyndsay Al-Shibli created a website for her Project DEgree students taking ENG 090 & RED 090. To view the project website, visit:

<http://dtccnickelanddimed.weebly.com/index.html>

Wolfram|Alpha

<http://www.wolframalpha.com/>

Free online access to the Wolfram|Alpha computational knowledge engine: answer questions; do math; instantly get facts, calculators, unit conversions, and real-time quantitative data and statistics; create plots and visualizations; and access vast scientific, technical, chemical, medical, health, business, financial, weather, geographic, dictionary, calendar, reference, and general knowledge - and much more.