Panopto Tutorials Reflection

Description

During Spring Semester 2013, I was coaching Dr. Susan Kushner Benson, associate professor in the College of Education, about how to integrate PowerPoint presentations with the Panopto lecture recording and screen capturing software program. Dr. Kushner Benson was looking for a way to enhance the PowerPoint presentations that she was using in one of her online courses by adding audio narration to the slides. Panopto is a free program available to all faculty members at The University of Akron. Faculty can use Panopto to record on-campus lectures and post them online, so students can watch them later, or create screen capture recordings from their computers. Instructors who teach online or blended courses at the university can also add Panopto recordings into their Springboard sites for convenient access. I was already familiar with Panopto, because one of my professors that semester had made a series of Panopto recordings for students to watch to provide instruction about how to complete assignments. However, I had never made a recording using Panopto, only watched the recordings as a student. In order to learn more about making Panopto recordings as a graduate assistant, I attended a Tech Talk Tuesday workshop on campus about Panopto and met with Mr. Jamie Newhall in the Design and Development Services department. Mr. Newhall showed me the basics of integrating a PowerPoint presentation into a recording, and he even gave me an improved USB headset that would be better at recording audio.

In March 2013, I created my first tutorial for Dr. Kushner Benson by making a Panopto screen capture recording to demonstrate how to integrate PowerPoint with Panopto. I downloaded the Panopto recorder onto my computer. Then I uploaded a PowerPoint that was an orientation for UA graduate students into Panopto and began recording. Even though the PowerPoint I used for the tutorial was not one of Dr. KB’s presentations, she could still see what a PowerPoint presentation would look like using the software. Instead of providing an audio narration of the information on the PowerPoint slides, I provided audio commentary coaching Dr. KB through the process of starting the recording and navigating between the slides in the PowerPoint. For the last five minutes of the recording, I demonstrated how to insert a link to a Panopto recording into a previous Springboard course site that Dr. KB and I were using. Since Dr. KB had added me as a teaching assistant the course, I was able to demonstrate this task from the instructor side. In addition, I demonstrated how to pause a recording and how Panopto will edit this out when the final recording is encoded and saved to the server at the university. After this encoding, the tutorial appeared in our practice Springboard site. This tutorial was almost eight minutes long.

In May 2013, I created a second tutorial for Dr. Kushner Benson by making a Panopto recording to help resolve some of the questions she had after she watched the first recording. In this recording, I uploaded a recent PowerPoint presentation that I made for one of my graduate classes, and I gave audio commentary about how I was using the Panopto software. After watching the first tutorial I made, Dr. KB wanted to know how to present the PowerPoint slides without capturing her entire computer screen. Therefore, when making this second tutorial, I used the option in the Panopto recorder where I could only capture the PowerPoint. After the recording was encoded, the tutorial appeared in our practice Springboard site. This tutorial was about nine minutes long.
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Impact

During my coaching experiences with Dr. Kushner Benson, I have always tried to emphasize the pedagogical reasoning behind why different features of a particular tool would be helpful. When I created these Panopto tutorials, I kept this principle in mind. For example, in my first tutorial, I pointed out to Dr. KB that Panopto was creating timestamps as I navigated from one slide in the PowerPoint to the next. The titles of the PowerPoint slides appear on the left side of the recording along with the starting time for each of the slides. This feature allows students to find the specific parts of the recording, or PowerPoint slides, that they would like to watch again. Students do not have to watch the entire recording from beginning to end. Students can also click on individual slides across the bottom of the Panopto viewer to advance to a specific part of the recording. This feature allows students to maximize their learning by focusing their attention on the content that they need to learn the most. Dr. KB really liked this feature because students would not have to waste time watching unnecessary parts of a Panopto recording. Another example of pedagogical reasoning for using Panopto is that students can watch the recordings at any time. This would be especially important for students taking online courses because students could be accessing the course at any time or day or night. Since Dr. KB teaches online courses, this would be important.

During the second tutorial, I emphasized that Dr. KB should pause for a few brief moments before continuing to speak after advancing to a new PowerPoint slide. While creating this tutorial, I put this suggestion into practice as much as possible. I explained that students might be watching individual slides of the PowerPoint, instead of the whole recording. When a student clicks on the slide he or she wants to hear, it would be helpful if there was a short pause before the audio begins. Providing listeners with pauses between important ideas and concepts is an important teaching concept for any form of multimedia development, not just Panopto. Learners need to be able to distinguish ideas in order to help them make connections and construct knowledge, and adding pauses to a multimedia production (or providing learners with the ability to pause audio or video recordings) is one way that instructors can accomplish this purpose.

Reflecting on Panopto as a multimedia tool, I feel that it has exceptional teaching and learning benefits. Instructors can easily produce lecture capture recordings with any websites or programs that are running on their computers. The only technical requirements for instructors are installing the Panopto Recorder and downloading Microsoft Silverlight to playback recordings. While the tutorials I made only featured audio narration, instructors can also add video recording by using their webcams. Students can watch recordings at any time to review concepts, which would be especially helpful for students in large lecture classes who might miss something the first time. It would also be helpful for students who prefer to learn in quiet environments without distractions. The only technical requirements for students are installing Microsoft Silverlight to play recordings.

Overall, I felt that Panopto was a relatively easy tool to use to produce lecture or screen capture recordings. I had no issues downloading the Panopto Recorder onto my laptop and installing the free Microsoft Silverlight plug-in. Once I started recording, there were no interruptions in the audio
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or video, unless a paused the recording. After I finished making the tutorials, it did not take a long time for the recordings to be encoded and posted online. I also appreciated being able to make the recordings public, so that I could get direct links to post the recordings in my e-Portfolio. My one complaint is that it was awkward to not see the Panopto recording window while navigating the PowerPoint during the tutorials. I knew that it was recording, but it would be helpful to have that being confirmed while I was speaking.

Dr. Kushner Benson had previously downloaded Smart Notebook software to her laptop to use to make audio recordings, but Smart Notebook files don’t work well in Springboard. Students would have to download the Smart software on their own computers in order to view the files. I feel that one of the most important considerations to take into account when creating an online course is to have course content that students can access with programs that are universal to most computers. At the end of this field experience, Dr. KB chose to add audio narration to her PowerPoints by just using the audio tool directly within PowerPoint. While I was disappointed that she did not want to use Panopto for this purpose, there is still a lot that I can take from this experience.

Intent

This fall I will be teaching a graduate-level course called Multimedia/Hypermedia for seven weeks while Dr. I-Chun Tsai, one of my professors in the Instructional Technology program, is taking leave to have a baby. This will be a fully-online course using Springboard, the learning management system at The University of Akron. When I took the course in Spring 2013, I watched several Panopto recordings that Dr. Tsai had produced to provide instruction to students. These Panopto recordings were extremely helpful. The course consists of completing several mini-projects that require the use of HTML coding to make web pages, digital image software, digital audio software, and digital video software. Since these projects are very technical, watching Dr. Tsai demonstrate how to do different tasks using the software was invaluable to my learning. Even though Dr. Tsai has already made the recordings used in the course, I would feel confident being able to help students access the Panopto recordings if they ran into any issues after making the tutorials for Dr. KB. If needed, I could also perhaps produce additional recordings to perhaps reinforce a skill or concept for students.

Making these tutorials for Dr. Kushner Benson was my first experience creating recordings using Panopto. I felt that my delivery and overall presentation was not confident at times and could have been more rehearsed. Since the audience for these tutorials was solely Dr. KB, the tutorials were more informal in nature. If I was creating a more professional recording for a larger audience, I would have an outline in front of me with a list of topics that I wanted to discuss. If I was teaching a large lecture class, then I would definitely consider using Panopto and another lecture capture tool to provide students with access to lectures outside of class. With more experience using Panopto, I feel that I would develop more confidence describing how to use this tool to others.