Best Practices for Teaching with Emerging Technologies
Second Edition
by Michelle Pacansky-Brock
Chapter 4: Tools for Communication and Content Creation--Beyond Text!

At CSU Channel Islands, I facilitate an online teaching preparation program for faculty that is comprised of three, 2-week online courses. Many faculty who participate in the program begin feeling skeptical about the quality of online learning. Not because they're concerned about content – because they're concerned about what will happen to their classes if they aren't present. For this reason, we have designed the first course in the program to focus on empowering faculty to learn how to foster a strong sense of who they are online, in addition to build relationships with me, the course facilitators, and their peers in a fully online environment. The course is titled "Humanizing Online Learning" and starting the program with it is making a big impact on how faculty feel about online learning.

In the course, faculty engage with their peers in asynchronous video conversations using a tool called VoiceThread, create a 1-minute "course bumper" video using Animoto, and embed that video in a website along with their written reflections in a tool called Tackk. By the time the course is over, faculty have moved out of their comfort zones, stepped into the role of content creators, and have overcome the anxiety that often comes along with speaking into a webcam and sharing that recording with others. Throughout the process, they're reminded that they are not perfect and their flaws are what make them wonderful and special to their students. They make mistakes and learn that the world doesn't stop if they screw up; in fact, these mistakes are pathways to growth as an online teacher.

Confronting our anxieties is a difficult thing to do, especially in a field that expects us to be experts. Brené Brown is an affective researcher at the University of Houston who has studied shame and vulnerability. From thousands of interviews with research subjects, she has found that stepping into the arena and confronting our vulnerabilities is how we, as humans, find connection with others and discover our authentic selves.[1] That may seem a little too warm and fuzzy for book about teaching with technology, but, from my experiences working with faculty, I have observed that when faculty take the hard road to confront their anxieties and move beyond the skills they know they're good at, they grow enormously. Skepticism is washed away with excitement, pride, and enthusiasm for teaching online. At the end of the humanizing course, one faculty shared, "I knew that learning in a classroom was a social interaction, but for some reason, I left that at the door when I tried to teach on-line. …Now I get it! And, I have learned that there are so many simple (and free) tools on-line that can help me make the experience more personal and more social."[2]

The tools that are shared in this chapter will extend the opportunity to you to bring your human presence into your online class, as well as create and share visually stunning presentations and other types of content with ease. Even if these are tools with which you are familiar or have heard of, I'm hopeful that I have contextualized them in an innovative way, opening up new ways of thinking about how technology can be used to enhance teaching and learning.

Zoom.us – Live Video Conversations

Feature Overview:

- Free and premium account options. Free account limits meetings to 40 minutes and 50 participants.

- Business licenses (minimum of 10 accounts) include an LTI plug-in for LMS single-sign on, and a personal vanity URL for each host's meeting room.

- Host and participants have access to desktop and application sharing, including option to share the screen from one's iPhone or iPad.

- Meeting participants do not need a Zoom account.

- Built-in chat, participant list, and "raise hand" feature.

- Host-specific controls include: Polling, breakout rooms (allowing for small group interactions within a meeting) and control over participants (lock room, lock screensharing, mute microphones/video).

- Co-annotation on shared screen.

- Ability to take control of another participant's screen.

- Support for live captioning available.

- Option to insert virtual backgrounds using a green screen feature

Zoom is an excellent and easy-to-use program for hosting live video conversations. It's a terrific option for online office hours and group activities and supports mobile devices, allowing for participants to join in from anywhere with an internet connection. In Zoom, the meeting host schedules the meeting using his or her Zoom account and sends a link to meeting participants. The participants click the link, download Zoom (only time only) onto their computer or if they click the link from a mobile app they will be prompted to download the app, and the meeting opens. While participants do need to download the application, they do not need an account to participate in a meeting. This, to me, is one of the features that sets Zoom apart from other synchronous video tools. There is a very low barrier to participate. It works. And it's easy.

Once in a Zoom session, users can toggle between two views: gallery view (looks like a Brady Bunch configuration) and speaker view, which shows the active speaker large on the

screen and the non-active speakers in smaller boxes along the top. There is a chat feature built-in for text communications. The chat content is downloaded to the host's computer as a txt file when the meeting ends. The meeting host has the ability to initiate polls to collect data from participants and manage the participant list, from which she may mute/unmute participant mics/webcams and see if anyone has activated the "raise hand" feature.

Zoom's break out room feature opens great opportunities for small group activities. The host simply clicks "break out rooms," indicates how many rooms are needed, chooses to manually assign participants to the rooms or have Zoom auto assign the room members, and then activates the rooms when ready. The participants then magically disappear into their rooms. During the break out room sessions, participants may request a visit from the host who can then pop into the room as needed. When the allotted time for the rooms is close to ending, the host gives the participants a 30 second countdown and then everyone rejoins in the main room.

Also, there is a recording feature built into every Zoom account and the host may give one or all participants permission to record the video too. This option enables students to drive the needs of their own learning. When recording is activated, the video file is downloaded directly to the computer of the user(s) that activated the recording. Those with premium accounts can also choose the cloud recording option, which auto-hosts the video online and sends an email to the host with the direct link.

ZOOM TIP!

Zoom works great as a screencasting (videos of your screen with your voice narration) tool too. Simply start a new meeting with video, click "share screen," click record, and start speaking. The video will be downloaded to your computer and you may then import it into a

video editing program to clean it up or upload it directly to YouTube or another hosting service. Upgraded Zoom accounts include the option to upload recordings directly to the cloud.

SHOWCASE

HOW LIVE VIDEO TOOLS OPEN THE GATEWAY FOR MOBILE GUEST SPEAKERS

As educators, we all understand how inspirational it can be to connect students with guest speakers. But today's digital, mobile society now allows guest speakers from anywhere in the world to enter our classrooms without any type of travel. There are many tools that support the inclusion of mobile guest speakers in your class – Skype, Zoom, and Google Hangouts are three of my favorites. The inspirational story below provides a wonderful example of the motivational impact on using technology to connect students with a subject matter superstar.

Lori Rusch is a vibrant art history professor who teaches at multiple institutions throughout the Los Angeles area—including Rio Hondo College, Cal State LA and has also taught advanced level art history courses at Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. The story I am about to share here is one of the most inspirational stories I've heard about using technology in the classroom to empower student learning.

Rusch is a self-proclaimed "Freeway Flyer," a term used frequently in California to describe the reality of part-time instructors who teach at multiple campuses (often with no office but their car trunks and limited access to campus resources), usually with little

certainty about the existence of their job from term to term. I share this context because I think it's important to relate to the complexities and challenges that many faculty members navigate continuously while trying to meet the needs of their students. Despite these circumstances, Lori's commitment and passion to teaching and innovation in the classroom shines.

The event from her high school class that is shared here was not part of Lori's plan for her course—it was a spontaneous move to respond to an unexpected interest and enthusiasm that had bubbled up to the surface in her class as her students were shown excerpts of Nigel Spivey's video series, "How Art Made the World." *Who* would ever imagine that an art historian could become a celebrity on a high school campus? Go figure. Rusch allowed her students' energy, curiosity, and wonder to flow naturally until one day, while listening to students enthusiastically mimic Spivey's English accent, she suggested, "Well, why don't you contact him and see if he'd chat with us?"

The students were stunned. Surely, Spivey seemed unreachable to high school students. He is, after all, a celebrity. They even asked, "Why would *he* want to talk to *us*?" Rusch contextualized things a bit and explained that Dr. Spivey is a real person and a real professor—a teacher—at Cambridge University and if he is an educator, why would he *not* want to speak to a group of students? With conviction a student asked, "Do you think we could do a video conference with him?" And that's how it all began.

In the coming weeks, the students worked together (again, remember *none of this* was for credit) to draft a letter to Dr. Spivey which their teacher sent to him on their behalf at his Cambridge email address. Not long after, he accepted their invitation. Rusch suggested to him that the conversation be facilitated with Skype and the two of them connected one time in advance to be sure the technology would be capable of managing an overseas video exchange (both users were utilizing the free version of Skype).

Meanwhile, to help accommodate the students' desire to work as a team to develop interview questions, Rusch elected to set up a Facebook page for the students who had accounts to use (most were already using the service). The students interacted between class meetings to collaboratively draft the interview questions for Spivey's virtual visit to their class. As the date grew closer, they also created posters for the event and began to hang them around campus.

The interview occurred on a Friday morning—two hours before the students' classes actually began. Colleagues shook their heads at the antics. One told Lori that she'd be lucky to "get two kids to show up." They were wrong, oh so wrong! Not only did students come, they packed the room. These students arrived to hear/see this interview because they were excited and inspired, *not because they had to be there*. All the myths and comments I've heard about students "these days" being apathetic and unwilling to do more than they're required to do are capsized by this story—which, I think, is why I love it so much! And it crystallizes the difference a great teacher can make; one who is committed to being flexible to support, guide and cultivate the fluidity of her students' energy through the process of learning.

The interview went without a hitch, except for a two-second delay before Spivey's video image appeared. The students, one after another (a few dressed in outfits that mirrored the attire that Spivey wore in his video series), approached the webcam and asked Spivey the questions they had prepared while the rest of the students watched and listened.

If you'd like to watch a partial video recording Rusch made of the interview as well as a presentation she created and shared on SlideShare, visit the Chapter 4 resources shared online at: TeachingWithEmergingTech.com.

Piktochart - engaging infographics for online and print

piktochart.com

Feature Overview

- Easy-to-use infographic creator with format options ranging from online graphic, presentation slide, report, or printable poster.

- Free account available. Results in watermark on your work, limits templates and privacy options.

- Deeply discounted individual educator and classroom accounts available. Benefits include removal of watermark, access to all templates, high resolution image and PDF exports (for print), increased file storage for your own images, enhanced privacy options.

- Includes a robust library of icons, charts, and maps for use in your work.

- Import your data from Microsoft Excel, Google Spreadsheet, or Survey Monkey and render it in visual format.

- Free mobile app for iPad.

An infographic is an image that communicates ideas and/or data. Infographics are valuable resources when you are designing an online course. They support principles of Universal Design for Learning by offering a visual method of communication. Creating infographics, however, is not an easy task. It requires access to existing icons and visual imagery that is properly licensed for re-use, in addition to keen design skills. Piktochart is an online tool that makes creating infographics easy.

The free account is robust enough to support any beginning creator of infographics, but if you really want to embrace their power, upgrade to the individual educator account. Not only will it eliminate the branding watermark, but you'll have more options for managing the privacy of your work and be able to export the graphics into high quality and printable formats.

When you (or your students) create an infographic, consider including a Creative Commons license in the work so it clearly communicates to others how you permit its re-use. I created an infographic using my Piktochart educator account that identifies six tips for recording video. Knowing it would be valuable to other educators, I shared the graphic with a CC-BY license, which allows others to re-use it and adapt (or remix) it to fit their own needs, provided they attribute me in their re-use of the content.

Figure 4.1 Infographic created with Piktochart. By Michelle Pacansky-Brock, CC-BY

➤ TIP!

INFOGRAPHICS FOR ASSESSING LEARNING

Like many other tools highlighted in this chapter, Piktochart is an ideal way to challenge students to demonstrate knowledge of an issue in a visual and concise manner. If your class includes a required research paper, you may wish to incorporate one or both of the following options as alternative student assessment methods:

- produce an infographic that accompanies the report, communicating a position on the issue backed up with data. Require students to share their infographic on at least one social media network of their choice and have them include a screenshot of that share along with their report and infographic.

- develop a website (using Adobe Spark Page, Populr, or a tool of their choice) that includes an abstract of their report, a link to the report, and an embedded version of their infographic.

When incorporating data into an infographic, sources must be cited in the graphic (at the bottom, in footnote fashion) to ensure the graphic is credible.

Jing—Visual Communications

TechSmith.com/jing

Feature Overview

- Facilitates seamless creation, hosting, and sharing of screenshots and up to five-minute

long screencasts with a simple link.

- Free application that requires installation on your computer (PC or Mac).

- When you install Jing you simultaneously sign up for a free screencast.com account to which your Jing screencasts (videos) and screenshots (images) are hosted (when you select this option).

- Jing is a TechSmith product (creator of SnagIt and Camtasia).

I actually included Jing in the Essentials Toolkit (see Chapter 3) as a screencasting tool but I want to share it here too, in an effort to demonstrate how it can be used in different ways. Jing, at its simplest, gives you the extra boost to make your online communications visual. Jing saves you time and will infuse your online communications with clarity, warmth, and personalization.

Scenarios

Here are two scenarios showing how you can use Jing to enhance communication with your students at a distance.

Scenario #1: Responding to Student Questions with Online Video

Robert Kelley, a psychology professor at MiraCosta College, is in his office responding to emails. He receives a notification that a student has made a post in the "Ask a Question" forum he has set up in his online behavioral statistics class. Robert clicks on the link and is taken to the student's post within his learning management system. The student's post reads, "Professor Kelley, I am having difficulty understanding the types of errors regarding hypothesis testing. Can you please explain what the difference between them is?"

As Robert prepares to respond to this question, he has two choices. First, he could type

his response, taking extra care to explain his ideas carefully and clearly, perhaps using excerpts from the learning module itself to repeat the ideas for reinforcement. Or, in roughly the same amount of time, he could choose to use Jing to create a video reply, enabling the student to both see and hear the response. With Jing and a microphone, Robert can use his computer screen as a whiteboard to answer his student's questions. Not only will he be able to walk his student through a response but he will also infuse his teaching with an encouraging, understanding tone.

He chooses to use Jing and his workflow is simple. To get started he opens up a blank document in skrbl.com (an online collaborative whiteboard application) or MS Paint and uses it as an whiteboard to illustrate the concept to the student. When he's ready to start his demonstration, he moves his cursor and grabs the cross-hair icon from the Jing sun icon hovering in the corner of his screen. He quickly drags the cross-hairs across the portion of his screen he wants to record, clicks the "record video" option, waits for the 3–2–1 countdown, and begins to speak. Making sure his explanation is less than five minutes (the max recording time for Jing), he finishes the recording and clicks "stop." Next he selects from the two upload options presented to him in Jing: upload to Screencast.com or download to his computer. Robert selects the first option and within a few minutes, Jing responds, indicating that the URL to his video has been pasted to his computer's clipboard.

Now Robert returns to the student's question and writes, "That is a great question. I have provided you with a video response to your question. You can view it at http:// . . ." By using Jing, Robert has effectively responded to the student's question in a highly personalized way. The student has not only had his question answered but has had a custom video explanation recorded for him. By listening to his professor's explanation, he feels more connected to the material, the class itself, and has another instructional method available to him to learn the material and meet the course objectives. In addition to this, by sharing the instructional Jing

video in the discussion forum, Robert has effectively made it available to all other students who may have the same question.

Scenario #2: Providing Voice Feedback on Essays With Jing

Dan Barnett is a philosophy professor at Butte College. As an online instructor, he wants students not only to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments but to improve their overall writing skills. He makes a great effort to share constructive feedback with students but is intimately aware of the amount of time it takes to give each paper a thorough review. But Dan wonders if there's a better way to deliver that feedback to his online students. What if he could deliver it with his voice, rather than text on a screen? Could Jing be used to humanize the grading experience for students? And, if so, how would they respond?

So, he tries a new approach in his online Methods of Argument class. Using a course management system with in-line annotation tools, he highlights key areas of a student's paper he would like to discuss.

The goal (since Jing limits videos to five minutes) is to avoid minutiae. Instead, Dan identifies the top three or so biggest issues the student needs to address. The student may need help with paraphrasing, in how best to write about a philosophical essay, or with an understanding of a central concept.

When he has in mind the areas to discuss, he opens the Jing app, adjusts the crosshairs over the highlighted paper on the screen, clicks "record video," waits for the 3-2-1 countdown, and then speaks directly to the student using the highlights as a guide.

He maintains a steady, helpful tone (even when showing a student that a certain sentence is copied right from the philosopher without attribution) and is careful never to be accusatory or to mention a grade. (The grade for the paper becomes clearer in his mind once he's talked

about it, so he enters the grade after recording his comments.)

When he's done, he clicks "stop" and then opts to upload the video to Screencast.com. Jing promptly produces a unique URL for the video, copies it to his computer's clipboard, and Dan pastes the link into the feedback area for the assignment within the secure gradebook of his course management system. He continues this process until all the papers are graded.

Cynthia, one of Dan's students, logs into the course management system, views her letter grade, clicks the link in the "feedback" area, and views the 5-minute video. Hearing her instructor's voice adds a human element to her experience. She really understands where he is coming from, how she could improve her writing and doesn't have hurt feelings as she frequently experiences with written feedback.

The screencast.com site tracks views, so Dan is able to see that most students viewed the comments. One student shared:

> … even if something comes across as sounding a bit harsh, hearing it in your … soothing voice, softens the words and it sounds gentle and encouraging. I am an extremely sensitive person and I get my feelings hurt easily. I love to write and have done very well in other writing classes but have found this class very difficult, so any criticism is difficult for me, even though I know I need it to succeed.

This concludes the CC-licensed excerpt of this chapter. The full, final chapter is copyrighted to Routledge only available by purchasing the text.

Notes

[1] Brown, B. (2015). How the Course to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead. New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2012.
[2] Pacansky-Brock, M. (2016). Humanizing Online Learning. SlideShare. Retrieved July 16, 2016 from

http://www.slideshare.net/brocansky/humanizing-online-learning-60892828