IUB iPad Faculty Learning Community

Members of the IUB iPad Faculty Learning Community (FLC) have been working since September 2010 on developing ways of incorporating iPads into their courses and classroom activities. The eight members of the iPad FLC, who were chosen from over 60 applicants, have developed and carried out specific class activities utilizing the 25 student iPad kit made available for use in their courses. They have also met regularly to discuss their plans for using the iPads, as well as the outcomes of their experiments and the challenges of using iPads in the classroom. The members of the iPad FLC are Simon Brassell (Geology), Joshua Danish (Education), Jonathan Elmer (English), Joe Pomerening (Biology), Anne Pyburn (Anthropology), Emily Okada (Libraries), Leslie Sharpe (Fine Arts), and Marty Siegel (Informatics). Brief descriptions of their projects are provided below.

Leslie Sharpe

Students in Leslie Sharpe’s studio art course, Multimedia Art (Fine Arts D310/D410/D510) exploited the unique potential of the iPad for audio-visual art experiences to create web-based digital art in both team-based and individual projects. These projects required students to not only learn about the technology needed in programming, but also to incorporate certain elements—either examples of “old” media such as 35mm or 45 rpm vinyl records, or certain iPad apps—into their creations. The final works and team collaborations were shown in a very successful exhibition titled “iCan (we did)” that took place in the School of Fine Arts in December 2010.

Joe Pomerening

iPads are an excellent fit for Joe Pomerening’s biology course, L211 Molecular Biology, which “blends lecture, audiovisual resources in the form of podcasts and other media, and interactive formative assessment exercises through the use of clickers.” In one of these formative assessments using the iPad’s visual capabilities, students were given a visual problem to solve in class. A small group of students were given iPads and asked to draw the answer. The students’ answers were projected for the rest of the class to see, to confirm their own understanding of the concepts involved. Pomerening has concluded that using iPads in his class will help him see what some of his students are thinking, which will benefit both him and his students.
Jonathan Elmer

Using iPads as readers has been the focus of Jonathan Elmer’s project. Elmer, collaborating with graduate student Miranda Yaggi, conducted an experiment in Yaggi’s upper division English course in which students compared the iPad as a reader with other readers (laptops, Kindles, Nooks) and with traditional paperback books. Interestingly, students found the traditional paperback to provide the most satisfying reading experience. In the spring of 2011, he will also work with another graduate student, Jon Blandford, to use the iPads in projects involving annotating poems and writing collaboratively.

Simon Brassell

Simon Brassell used iPads in his introductory geosciences course, Geology G104 Evolution of the Earth. In the lab classes students used iPads “to measure rock configurations and to construct a geological map” as part of the culminating exercise. Students polled about their experiences using the iPads gave overwhelmingly positive feedback; therefore, “the iPad will be integrated into several additional labs for G104 during spring 2011 to further assess its utility and benefit, especially in aiding recognition and conceptual awareness of the spatial relationships among rock units.”

Joshua Danish

The iPads fit well into Joshua Danish’s research interests in learning through activity. In his Learning Sciences courses, P544 Applied Cognition and P631 Theorizing Learning in Context, he has used iPads to view videos in class and blog about them, to create and manipulate representations of how students’ research ideas fit into a particular theory about activity, and even to tweet about the activity. He believes the use of iPads has led to richer discussion and deeper learning when he has had the opportunity to use them in classes.
**Anne Pyburn**

For Anne Pyburn, using the iPad for authentic field mapping exercises in archeology has been “all about the apps.” While the form factor of the iPad seems to be perfect for the work archeologists do, finding the perfect app that allows her students to collaborate effectively in the field has been challenging. Problems with cold fingers and unreliable wireless connections hampered her class’s first field experience in E104 Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents: An Introduction to the Scientific Method, but Anne is thinking about what it would take to design the perfect app for her vision of carrying out field archeology.

**Marty Siegel**

Marty Siegel has an interest in “messy problems”, and he dropped one on the students in his Informatics I441 and I541 course on Human Computer Interaction when he asked them to design a virtual textbook for the iPad. Working in teams, students had to grapple with how to think about a new design for a textbook with the focus on learning. What features of the iPad enable learning? To what extent does the medium simply act as a tool with which good (or bad) design can be accomplished?

Perhaps Marty Siegel summed it up when he commented, “The real challenge for the iPad is not the device itself but the materials and applications that people create with the devices.”