

Report
of the
Task Force
on Convergence
Spring 2008

Presented to Dean John Wright,

April 23, 2008

College of Journalism and Communications

University of Florida



College of Journalism and Communications
Interactive Media Lab

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MEMO:

TO: Dean John Wright

FROM: David Carlson

RE: Convergence Task Force report

DATE: April 23, 2008

Dear John,

It is my privilege to convey to you the Spring 2008 report of the Convergence Task Force.

This semester, we moved forward in several ways, but our most profound progress came on three fronts: faculty and staff interest, curricula and facilities planning. I will address them one at a time.

Faculty interest: As I'm sure you recall, membership in the Task Force always has been voluntary. We finished the fall semester with 13 members who regularly attended meetings. This spring, interest blossomed. Several more faculty members joined and at least three staff members became ex-officio members. Three of our departments and all of our stations were represented.

While encouraging, this also presented challenges.

As the number of members neared 20, scheduling and holding meetings became unwieldy. The Task Force decided in early March to divide itself into two subcommittees based on the interests of the members. They are curriculum and facilities. The subcommittees then met in odd numbered weeks and the full task force continued meeting in even numbered weeks. In all, the full Task Force met four times, the curriculum subcommittee met four times and the facilities subcommittee met three times.

In most ways, those meetings built on what was started in Fall 2007.

Curricula: We identified a list of skills we believe students should have when they graduate. We then prioritized those skills, developed recommendations on how to measure them and tried to assign those skills to various courses. In the end, it was decided that assigning skills to specific courses is beyond the scope of the Task Force and is best left to the departments. The skills list is in the report that follows.

The Foundation for The Gator Nation

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Facilities: We contacted five companies that specialize in designing and building high-tech media facilities.

We learned that projects such as ours are routinely done in six stages: Analysis of existing workflow, consulting about future workflow, facilities design, bidding, construction / project management, and, finally, testing. The first three, through preparation of bid documents, are done as a “work for hire.”

To date, we have interviewed three of those companies and expect to have a recommendation in May to move forward with one of them.

Finally, we have assessed the progress made this semester on the recommendations we proposed and you accepted last December.

Those recommendations -- with addenda to show the steps that were taken in Spring 2008 and those that are planned for Fall 2008 – also are in the report that follows.

On behalf of all the members of the Task Force, thank you for this opportunity to help the college move forward in this critical way.

Sincerely,

David E. Carlson
Chair

On behalf of Task Force members: Kevin Allen, Justin Brown, Rob Carr, Amy Jo Coffee, Meredith Cochie, Larry Dankner, Boaz Dvir, Mike Foley, Lauren Hertel, Mark Leeps, Belio Martinez, Renee Martin-Kratzer, Mindy McAdams, William McKeen, David Ostroff, Janis Page, Roland Rogers, Ted Spiker, Sue Wagner, Bob Wood.

ONLINE JOURNALISM SKILLS UFCJC	
SKILL	MEASURABLE OUTCOMES
AP print style writing for the Web	12-inch story in AP print style w/ Web-appropriate head, subheads, and hyperlinks
audio	Create a 2-minute clip with clear nat sound, narration and interview material, edited digitally and compressed for the Web
video	2 to 2.30 min. video that tells a coherent story and demonstrates: use of shots in sequences; clean audio, both sync and non-sync; shot variety; use of tripod or minimal camera movement (you could actually do this with a point and shoot and a decent audio recorder)
online ethics	Answer questions about five case studies concerning: advertising interference in editorial; hidden bias or manipulation by the journalist; sock puppetry or fakery; image and audio manipulation; staged or posed events (video, audio, photo); fear or favor
compression	Use settings in a program such as Windows Movie Maker or the Flash Video Encoder to compress a large AVI file into a nice-looking Web-friendly format
Content Management Systems (CMS)	Work in a shared editing environment to post, edit and approve content; insert working links; write SEO-friendly headlines; use and manage semantic tags and/or categories
blogging	Create and maintain a single-subject blog for at least eight weeks (minimum 18 posts) , with at least two posts per week; manage comments and spam; modify and customize the sidebar(s); write SEO-friendly headings; manage tags and/or categories effectively; provide appropriate links; include images, including linked images; include audio and/or video in-line in at
XHTML, CSS	(1) Be able to build a personal portfolio site with valid code (2) I would TEST this with a set of multiple-choice questions: Demonstrate knowledge of 10 basic XHTML tags and knowledge of CSS (body, font, color, margin, padding and div)
FTP	Be able to FTP files to/from different servers (Plaza, College, etc.) using FireFTP or similar.
RSS/podcasting	Be able to set up an RSS feed from the blog and subscribe using an RSS reader. Be able to do the same with podcast episodes and iTunes
Web search skills	Successfully complete a timed scavenger hunt (and let's ask Corv)
still photo and image manipulation	Shoot a photo story about a person doing a task or activity they are very good at; crop, tone and size the best six photos for Web presentation; write captions for each photo; the six must demonstrate variety, pacing, and good composition, including rule of thirds
audio slideshows	1.30 to 2 min. Soundslides presentation that tells a coherent journalistic story and includes: good shot variety and composition; natural sound; interview(s) and/or narration
online audience analysis	Be able to read and understand a daily Omniture report.

online advertising	Be able to explain how the integration of advertising online is different from in traditional media. (on an exam)
social networking	Be able to discuss how social networking is important to media companies and independent content producers.
citizen journalism	Be able to explain what it is, give some examples of how news organizations are incorporating it, and list 3 pros and 3 cons of UGC.
interactive map creation	Be able to use a web-based service (such as Wayfaring or FMAtlas) to create a datapoint map and incorporate it into a web page
databasing	Be able to download data from an online source and reformat it in an Excel/CSV spreadsheet, then upload the data to Caspio Bridge and build an interactive search form to be incorporated into a web page
not being afraid of technology	(1) Find a tutorial for some kind of software; learn what it teaches; teach another student how to make something with your new skill; (2) on demand, learn how to use a brand-new Web 2.0 app and demonstrate it to the group

Spring 2008 progress on short, medium and long-term solutions

The following is a list of the recommendations made by the Task Force in Fall 2007 with notations about the status of each of them.

Short-term solutions identified for Spring 2008

- Promote the online courses and encourage all students to take one
 - This can be done through Introduction to Journalism, MMC 2100 and RTV 2100 as well as other classes
 - **STATUS:** Interest has grown substantially among undergraduate students
- Add sections to MMC 3260 (Communications on the Internet) and promote that, especially among journalism students
 - **STATUS:** One section was added for Spring 2008 and three more have been added to date for Fall 2008. Enrollment for fall is 120 as of April 9, 2008
 - **STATUS:** Telecommunication has added sections to its intro course, RTV 3280, for fall. Enrollment is 56
 - **STATUS:** That means 176 students will be served in Fall 2008
- Require (or at least allow) cross-pollination of students between telecom and journalism
 - Shadow a WUFT-TV crew as it covers and edits a story (JOU 4946, 4341)
 - Watch the WUFT-TV newscast from the studio and/or the control room (JOU 4946, 4341 and possibly other courses)
 - Spend at least one shift shadowing a professional journalist at a newspaper (RTV 4283 and TV2)
 - Spend a shift with students working in the IML
 - **STATUS:** Not fully implemented for spring, but we are on track for fall
 - Create workshops and mini courses for skills development among students and faculty
 - Some of these might be taught by students
 - **STATUS:** None created so far
- Add a segment to MMC 2100 that deals directly with online
 - This already exists in RTV 2100
 - **STATUS: Unknown**
- Commence the converged newsroom planning project
 - **STATUS:** Under way. We are well on the road to hiring consultants and have held two meetings with UF PPD and one with a PPD architect, Lou Shilling

Medium-term solutions identified for Fall 2008

- Continue the changes made in Spring 2008
- Allow students to take either the telecom or the journalism online intro course
 - Requires coordination between Lauren Hertel and Dave Carlson
 - Would greatly increase the numbers who could pass through each semester
 - **STATUS:** Still working on it. The skills list is a big step forward
- Add more sections to MMC 3260.
 - Requires grad students to teach the labs
 - **STATUS:** We have added three more sections so far for fall and we will add even more for spring if demand warrants the seats
- Consider the long-term publishing vehicle we will use for a converged college
 - A unified Web site for all college media?
 - **STATUS:** None yet, but this will be tackled as part of the multi-platform newsroom project

Long-term solutions to further explore

- Faculty development to update skills of faculty members in all departments
 - **STATUS:** Recommendations are attached
- Team teaching
 - Have two or three faculty members share teaching duties, or
 - Split the semester into three one-credit courses of five weeks, each taught by a different faculty member
- Merge the journalism and telecom online courses (MMC 3260 and RTV 3280)
- Enable much more student movement among departments
- Multi-platform newsroom
 - **STATUS:** The facilities subcommittee expects to have a report in May, 2008

Further recommendations based on Spring 2008 meetings

- Curricula
 - Engage the Advertising and Public Relations departments to strongly encourage their students to take MMC3260/RTV3280
 - Continue collaboration between Telecom and Journalism to avoid duplication of effort for intro courses MMC3260/RTV3280
 - Incorporate more basic online instruction into MMC/RTV2100

- Have a pilot experimental course in Fall 2008 that will put one or two of the most advanced students from each capstone course together to do a journalism project or two. This should include TV, radio, reporting, editing, magazine, online and photo. This will require cooperation among all the capstone instructors and someone willing to take the helm for the class.
- Faculty training
 - a. Develop guidelines and create resources to provide online skills training to faculty in all four departments, but place particular emphasis on journalism and telecommunication