Sharing Your Wealth: The Importance of Developing and Maintaining A Media Website

Memorializing the work of your learners is important for several reasons. The obvious reason for archiving work is to allow your students' work to be viewed and appreciated. A second, also obvious reason, at least in education, is to serve as example to those who follow. But the third reason is subtler and perhaps most important of all in a broader sense: the work of learners is a historical comment, a perspective on their world that has its own merit as a record of the society within which they dwell.

Moreover, there is a chronological and a topical aspect relative to work in media, and organizing the many topics and sequences which accumulate over the years on a shelf is, while a worthy endeavor in itself, may do little to promulgate their work and make it readily available to others if the projects are not accessed. Finding a way to venue student work while incorporating both the timeline development of your students as well as the topical categories, *i.e.* news shows, documentaries, chaptered videos or original works, is a challenge in itself. Combine that with accessibility and the question is clear: what is the best way to memorialize and archive the work of your learners? *Ta dah* … more technology. Yup, that's right, and the answer is: a website.

Establishing a website sets a media course in motion toward the achievement of several goal aspects, including school-oriented, course-oriented and learner-oriented. The school aspect of a website is that it memorializes for all time the history of a school through the years. When we first established a website to showcase media productions seven years ago (vphsmedia.com), I did not see this aspect at all. Now, nearly a decade later, the comments regarding school news, the hair styles and dress, the music and movie reviews, sports teams, dances, even the uniforms of sports and band, are presented in such an accessible way that the contrast through the years has become a really delightful aspect of the website for current students and parents. Graduated students who have completed college and are established in their own careers visit the site to walk down memory lane. As a delivery medium, a website, unlike a DVD, never gets scratched, is never lost in a move from one apartment to another, and provides a constant link with one's *alma mater*. I believe that a website, as a historical archive of the history of a high school through videos, presents an ideal, albeit largely untapped, venue.

The course-oriented benefit of a website is to showcase the work of media students in an accessible way. Both students from the present, past and future, their parents, faculty and even relatives in other states and countries, can view the work produced in the course in an unaltered condition. Effects used by students in the past, particularly excellent work, can serve as benchmarks for current learners as they strive to move into this rapidly changing medium. In a production-oriented course, the work of past learners serves a valuable and lasting launching pad for current students, and yet pulling out tapes and DVD's, hanging paintings on walls and filling shelves with sculpture… no matter what the medium, sorting and saving work, as well as simply having room for display is a real problem if the course has a long history. The niche of a website and its ability to not only preserve the work, but *organize* it according to genre and chronology is unsurpassed. Further, *the sheer accessibility it provides is unmatched.* The course's evolving direction and production level becomes so beautifully transparent; if a course has value and productivity, a website is most certainly the ideal way to venue it. This applies to media beyond the electronic arts as well.

Finally, there is the student aspect of a website. Artists produce for their public. Video production, whether for television, movies, documentaries or computer graphics, is art. So in the broad schema, painters paint, drawers draw, sculptors sculpt, writers write, and producers produce…. and then set their work before their public. Multiple exhibitions both inside and outside of school exist for the traditional media inclusive of competitions. True, there are