

A Thematic Approach to Sustainability within an Interactive Multimedia Development Course

Alison Young

Unitec New Zealand

ayoung@unitec.ac.nz

1 Introduction

Sustainability appears to be a current buzz word. For example “One of the most commonly used and widely adopted definitions of sustainable development is “meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Essentially, sustainability is about the relationship between people and planet; remembering that we are inextricably part of this planet, and that our societies (including economies) depend upon healthy biological and physical systems.” (University of Canterbury, 2009)

At their annual conference in Nelson in 2007 the National Advisory Committee on Computing Qualifications (NACCQ) adopted a policy statement on sustainability (NACCQ, 2008). A number of notable educational institutions including University of Canterbury (University of Canterbury, 2009) and Otago Polytechnic, have also adopted sustainability policies (Otago Polytechnic, 2009).

Lecturers are being encouraged to include sustainable development and practice within their courses (Mann & Elwood, 2009) to expose all students to the ideas and beliefs of sustainable practice. When you teach a course such as Interactive Multimedia Development which is more about critique and management than cutting code how do you incorporate a philosophy such as sustainability? This paper outlines the process of including this philosophy and exposing all the students to the concept of sustainable practice.

2 The Course

The Interactive Multimedia Development Course is an optional 15 credit course in the Master of Computing degree at Unitec. The courses are taught on four weekends with online support between the weekends. One of the learning outcomes of this course is:

- “Critically compare and contrast multimedia applications.”

This learning outcome is required to be covered on the third weekend of the course. In the past the lecturers have set the multimedia applications for the students to compare and critically contrast. These have typically included topics such as games, educational or marketing applications, however to add this new dimension it was decided to give two groups of students topics of “Global Warming” and “Sustainability” and require them to find applications to compare and critically contrast. The students worked in pairs to search and find websites or

application, choosing two that included as many multimedia elements as possible and met the criteria for comparison. The students were then required to present their findings to the rest of the class.

3 Findings

In the global warming group the students chose:

<http://www.princesrainforestsproject.org/>

<http://www.climatecrisis.net/>

Both these sites incorporated: text, graphics, video, animation, and navigation issues. The students were able to compare these websites and also include information on how they could be enhanced with further multimedia elements.

In the sustainability group the students chose:

<http://www.target sustainability.co.nz/>

<http://www.sustain.canterbury.ac.nz/sustainability/index.shtml>

These sites were much more static and only incorporated: text, graphics, and navigation issues. The students in this group compared critically contrasted the sites as required and also commented on how the websites could be enhanced with animations and video. These sites could both be classified as “educational sites” and would therefore be much enhanced with more multimedia as suggested by the students.

4 Conclusion

Although in the future the whole concept of sustainability will be to require the students to develop “sustainable” applications this exercise was done to introduce the students to the concepts of sustainability in an overt and non threatening way yet still met the learning outcomes of the course. Informal feedback from the students was that it did raise their awareness of this global issue.

5 References

Mann, S., & Elwood, K. (2009) *A Simple Pledge*, retrieved 2nd may 2008 from http://www.otagopolytechnic.ac.nz/fileadmin/DepartmentalResources/Marketing/Simple Pledge Book latest version_emailable.pdf

NACCQ Annual Report (2008)

Otago Polytechnic (2009), retrieved 2nd May 2009 from <http://www.otagopolytechnic.ac.nz/about/sustainable-practice.html>

University of Canterbury (200) retrieved 2nd May 2009 from http://www.sustain.canterbury.ac.nz/sustainability/whatis_sustain.shtml