Interactive Television Distance Learning

Faculty Handbook

The ASU Interactive Television

Distance Learning Center Staff

What Is Distance Education?

Definition

The United States Distance Learning Association defines distance education as "the acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and instruction" (United States Distance Learning Association). A more generally accepted definition of distance education is education that takes places when the instructor and students are separated either by time and/or distance.

Brief History

While most people think distance education is a new concept, in reality it is more than a century old (Moore and Kearsley, 1996, p.19). In its early forms, distance education consisted of courses delivered through the mail, known as correspondence study.

In the early 1970's distance education changed dramatically with the opening of the British Open University. The university was designed to be a "nationwide system with no resident students. It would be large, well funded, and would employ the fullest range of communications technologies to teach a full university undergraduate curriculum to any adult who wanted such education" (Moore and Kearsley, 1996, p.26). The British Open University does not have units inside other conventional universities, instead, it is a "fully autonomous, degree-granting institution" (Moore and Kearsley, 1996, p.27).

As technology has developed, distance education has developed with it. Today, distance education makes use of broadcast television, computer networks, and various other delivery methods.

Why Teach At A Distance?

An educational institution may want to offer courses via distance education to increase enrollment, or to reach students who might not otherwise be able to take college courses due to family or career commitments. An institution may also use distance education to stay competitive with other schools in their state or even in the nation. The reasons are limitless.

What Is Compressed Video?

Compressed video is a form of video conferencing. Video conferencing allows people "at two or more locations to see and hear each other" (Videoconferencing For Learning, PacBell).

Compressed video allows the instructor to interact in real time with the students at the distance site, making a compressed video classroom seem more like a traditional classroom. Compressed video also will allow the instructor to connect with external resources. The instructor can invite guest speakers in to the classroom without the speaker having to travel to the site. Compressed video also allows for the use of diverse media ranging from still photos to PowerPoint presentations. By using different media, the instructor helps to keep the students active and involved in the class by making lectures visually interesting.

The main disadvantage with compressed video stems from the use of television monitors to put the teacher in the classroom. Students tend to become passive observers, instead of active learners.

How It Works

Compressed video takes analog video signal and converts it to a digital video signal using a computer called a codec. The new digital signal is then "compressed" by the computer and

transmitted down high-speed digital telephone lines to the distant site. Once the signal arrives at the distant site, the process is reversed.

For conferences with more than one distant site, the system is voice activated, automatically switches to the appropriate sound source.

Compressed Video At Arkansas State University

Brief History

The College of Nursing and Health Professions established the Interactive Television Distance Learning Center at Arkansas State University in 1992. The first class taught via compressed video at ASU was broadcast from the Jonesboro campus to Ozarka Technical College in Melbourne, AR. This first class had a total of 29 students at both sites: 25 at ASU – Jonesboro and 4 at Ozarka Technical College.

The Interactive Television Distance Learning Center has experienced tremendous growth since its inception in 1992. We have grown from one class in 1992 to an average of 40 classes a semester. The number of students taught via compressed video has increased from 29 in 1992 to an average of 1500 students a semester in 2000. More sites are being added to the ASU network extending ASU's reach and providing educational opportunities to students statewide.

ASU Interactive Television Distance Learning Center

The ASU Interactive Television Distance Learning Center is located on the sixth floor of the College of Nursing and Health Professions building. Our staff currently consists of the following people:

- Mike Bowman, Coordinator
- Tracy Farmer, Technical Coordinator
- Carolyn Chamberlain, Secretary

Our job is to make the instructor's and students' experience with compressed video as enjoyable as possible. We accomplish this by offering different services to the instructors and students.

We offer training for the instructor on how to use the equipment. This training consists of equipment operation and suggestions on how the instructor can convert his/her course so that it can be taught over compressed video. We suggest that all instructors who teach on compressed video have a training session at least once a year. This is because the technology is constantly changing.

Besides training the instructor on the equipment, we will also help the instructor convert their course material to either PowerPoint or web pages. If you would like us to convert your material, we ask that you bring it to us at least six months before it is needed.

If at any time you have problems with the equipment, notify one of the staff members and they will remedy the situation as quickly as possible. Also, please feel free to offer suggestions on improvements and remember we are here to serve.

ASU Interactive Television Distance Learning Sites

Currently the ASU Interactive Television Distance Learning Center has the following sites in its network:

- Arkansas State University – Jonesboro (four classrooms)
- Arkansas State University – Beebe (two classrooms)
- Arkansas State University – Mt. Home (two classrooms)
- East Arkansas Community College – Forrest City (one classroom)
- Ozarka Technical College – Melbourne (one classroom)
- Mid South Community College – West Memphis (one classroom)

- Mississippi County Community College – Blytheville (one classroom)
- Black River Technical College – Pocahontas (one classroom)

The Interactive Television Distance Learning Center also sends classes to sites outside of the ASU network. These sites include, but are not limited to:

- Westark College – Fort Smith
- Mississippi County Community College – Osceola
- Crittenden Memorial Hospital – West Memphis
- Delta State University – Mississippi
- Alcorn State University – Mississippi
- Louisiana State University
- University of Tennessee
- University of Arkansas

Compressed Video Classroom

Equipment

The following equipment is found in each of the compressed video classrooms on the Jonesboro campus:

- VTEL Videoconferencing Unit. This is the heart of the compressed video classroom. The unit consists of a codec and television monitors that allow students and instructor to see and head activity at the local and distant site(s). The following teaching tools are available to enhance the compressed video classroom experience:

- Instructor Camera. On top of the left television monitor is a camera that is capable of tilting, panning and zooming. This camera is concentrated on the instructor for the students at the distant sites.
- Control Tablet. The control tablet is located on the instructor's podium and is used to move the classroom cameras, choose different video sources and control the incoming and outgoing audio.
- Document camera. The document camera is used in the same fashion as an overhead projector, except images are shown on the televisions. The document camera can be used to show anything from notes written on paper to X-ray film.
- VCR. The VCR can be used to show videos or record lectures. In the event a distant site cannot connect to the network, for instance during inclement weather or if they are experiencing technical problems, the VCR can be used to record the day's class and the tape can be sent to the distant site.
- Classroom camera. The classroom camera is located in a corner of each room over either the instructors right or left shoulder. This camera is primarily used to allow the students at the distant site(s) to see the local students.
- Microphones. Each classroom is equipped with between ten and eighteen microphones. There are two microphones on the instructor's podium and at least one microphone on each row of tables in each classroom. Again, this enhances interaction between students and instructor.

- Auxiliary computer. Attached to the document camera is an auxiliary computer. This computer is connected to the campus network, allowing the instructor to show web pages across the video network. Each computer also has the complete Microsoft Office 2000 Professional software package installed, allowing the instructor to make use of the PowerPoint presentation package.
- 35mm slide drum is available that can be connected to the document camera.

Teaching Via Compressed Video

Strategies

When preparing to teach a compressed video class, keep in mind that the tools available in the classroom are there to enhance your classroom experience, not distract from it. Students involved in a compressed video classroom are there for the same reason as students in a traditional classroom – to learn. Using the tools provided will help involve the students in the learning process and enhance your presentation

Variety is the spice of life. This is true when teaching on compressed video. Vary the delivery method you use. The technology lends itself to the use of probing question, group projects (in class and out), debate, calling on students (at the local and distant site) by name, and open discussion. No matter which delivery method you choose, remember to *keep <u>all</u> students involved*!

Assignments And Tests

Assignments and/or tests can be sent to the distant sites using fax, e-mail, or standard mail. When sending via standard mail, the package should be sent a minimum of one week in

advance. Faxes or e-mail should be sent at least 24 hours before class to allow time for distant site(s) coordinator to make appropriate copies.

Items can be sent out of the Interactive Television Distance Learning Center office located in the College of Nursing and Health Professions Building or from you own office. No matter where you send the items from, please make sure to include a transmittal sheet with detailed instructions for the site coordinator. A fax and standard mail transmittal sheet are included in this packet for your convenience. Please make copies of the transmittal sheet for the semester.

When receiving assignments/test from the distant site(s), the same time frames apply.

On test dates, a proctor will be available at all distant site to administer and collect the tests. If possible, please provide a test schedule to the distant site(s) coordinator so they can make appropriate arrangements to assure a proctor will be available on the date of the test. If a proctor is needed for the local class, it is your responsibility to make arrangements.

Contacts

Distance Site	Contact Person	Phone
ASU BEEBE P.O. Drawer H 1401 DeWitt Henry Dr. Beebe, AR 72012		
CONTACT:	*Tawnya Boughner-Sec.	501-882-8291
	After 5:00 p.m. call--------2nd #	501882-8328
	Email – taboughner@asub.arknet.edu	
	Fax	501-882-4403
ASU JONESBORO P.O. Box 489 State University, AR 72467-089		
CONTACTS:	*Mike Bowman, Coordinator	870-972-2532
	Cell Phone	870-243-3326
	Voice Mail	870-974-4381
	Email – mbowman@crow.astate.edu	
	* Tracy Farmer, Technical Coordinator	870-972-2532
	Cell Phone	870-243-3327
	Voice Mail	870-974-4894
	Email – tfarmer@crow.astate.edu	
	*Carolyn Chamberlain, Secretary	870-972-2532
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	Fax	870-972-2776
ASU MOUNTAIN HOME 1600 South College St. Mountain Home, AR 72653		
CONTACTS:	Ms. Roz Blagg	870-508-6110
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	Fax	870-508-6289 CVN
EAST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE Dept. of Distance Learning 1700 Newcastle Rd. Forrest City, AR 72335		
CONTACT:	*Ms. Denny Edwards	870-633-3754
	Email – denny@eacc.cc.ar.us	
	Fax	870-63-7222
	CVN Room	870-633-8438

BLACK RIVER TECHNICAL COLLEGE
P.O. Box 468
Pocahontas, AR 72455

CONTACT:	*Carl Hawkins	870-892-4565 (Ext 210)
	Email – carl@brtc.brtc.tec.ar.us	
	Fax	870-892-3546
	CVN Room	870-892-4565 (Ext. 289)

MIDSOUTH COMMUNITY COLLEGE
P.O. Box 2067
2000 W. Broadway, Room N-103
West Memphis, AR 72303

CONTACT:	*Joel Garrison	870-733-6899
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OZARKA TECHNICAL COLLEGE
P.O. Box 10
218 South Drive
Melbourne, AR 72556

CONTACT:	* Leveda Tate – Secretary	870-368-7371
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WESTARK COLLEGE
P.O. Box 3649
Fort Smith, AR 72913-3649
(Boreham Library #202)

CONTACT:	*Chris Jones, Classroom Tech. Coord. –	501-788-7192
	Email – chrjones@systema.westark.edu	
	CVN Room	501-788-7181
	Fax	501-788-7923

MISSISSIPPI COUNTY COMMUNTIY COLLEGE
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2501 S. Division St.
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Blytheville, AR 72316-1109

CONTACTS:	*Sec.—Pat Penn	870-762-3137
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	Fax	870-780-6114
	*Patsy Smith – Visual Audio Cord.	870-762-1020 (Ext. 1107)
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References

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