Meet Ron Lewis, CELT’s New Digital Media Assistant

By Worth Weller, Continuing Lecturer, English and Linguistics

In Fall 2015, Ron Lewis joined CELT. I was recently able to sit down with Ron to interview him about his new role.

Please describe your background and how it is particularly suited for your position as CELT’s Digital Media Assistant.

I studied fine art and animation as an undergraduate at IU. I wanted to be well rounded in the traditional field of art before becoming familiar with digital design. For a long while I was reluctant to even involve myself with computer art because I was afraid that it would one day be the end of traditional art as we know it. I quickly learned however that computers were only tools and that they did not lead to the demise of the art world but served as a new palette, so to speak, that required the same level of artistic input as traditional media.

What exactly is a “Digital Media Assistant”?

As a Digital Media Assistant it is my job to create, digitize and/or extract media such as video, audio, and images to a user-friendly format for the use of faculty. For instance, if you have a VHS tape of content recorded 22 years ago, chances are that in today’s advanced classrooms that content could not be shown because of updated equipment. In that case I extract the recording and digitize it and save it as an updated format. My job also includes assisting in the maintenance of CELT’s web page.

Why Mobility Matters Technology Intensive Set for June 3-5

The massive increase in digital content in the past decade is having a profound impact on the quality and cost of higher education. Electronic textbooks, MOOCs, apps, and new workflows are creating educational opportunities that simply did not exist just a few years ago. This is not about technology fads or the latest gadgets. This is about facing the challenges and maximizing the possibilities of a connected classroom. In addition to exploring the dynamics of a mobility-based education paradigm, faculty attending Why Mobility Matters will examine the practical implementation strategies to improve learning opportunities.

Dr. Jon Landis, our keynote speaker on June 3, is the US Development Executive for Apple Inc. He is a former professor in the College of Education from Millersville University, a public university in Pennsylvania, where he was the graduate coordinator of the Leadership Program and the Coordinator of the CyberSafe Institute. Landis has a Ph.D. in Sociology, a Master’s degree in Educational Leadership, and a B.S. in Chemistry. He has served as a

Suin Roberts utilizes an iPad in her class.

Ron Lewis, CELT’s Digital Media Assistant

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Thinking about faculty who primarily teach face to face, how can you help them achieve the kinds of student outcomes they are hoping for?

By providing the media content needed for their classes, I can relieve faculty of one less thing to think about. Though digitizing analog content is not rocket science, it certainly takes time to do-time that faculty could better spend preparing for their classes and aiding their students.

What about faculty who teach over the Internet?

Well, as an instructor myself, I have a rare opportunity to see the need for digital content from both sides of the coin. We’ve had some pretty tough winters recently, and there are always occasions when classes will cancel. For me canceling classes is a waste of valuable instructional time, so I can see the advantages of a hybrid class.

In my own case, I create video tutorial lectures for two reasons: one, for my students to be able to access the lessons as many times as necessary, and two, to be prepared in the event the class should cancel. For example, I had a recent incident while teaching my novice students an animation program called Maya. Class was cancelled because of the snow. My students were still a little intimidated by the software at that point, so I e-mailed them and suggested they grab some cocoa and go over the video lecture I uploaded onto Blackboard.

When the students returned, their projects were wonderfully executed. It appeared that the video gave them the guidance they needed.

Can you give us a recent example of how you have helped a faculty member?

A faculty member in the International Languages and Cultural Studies Department wanted to move from static PowerPoint presentations to video to demonstrate the process of writing Japanese kanji. We set up a video camera in her office and explained the steps for capturing the video, doing added voiceovers, editing, and exporting the presentation using Camtasia.

This streamlined the instructor’s teaching structure as she was able to ultimately post her live content on Blackboard for students to review as often as necessary.

What are your own professional goals as a CELT consultant to the IPFW faculty?

I’d like to make as many faculty members as I can comfortable with the ability of simplifying and streamlining their classrooms with the aid of digital media. Teaching should be a joy, and students should see that we love what we do.

(Editor’s Note: Ron teaches for the Dept. of Visual Communication and Design, but he is available in the CELT office on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. His e-mail is lewirs@ipfw.edu, and he can be reached by phone at his VCD office at 481-6709 or at the CELT office at 481-0473.)

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chemistry instructor, principal, curriculum director, and IT Director. The June 3 keynote at noon in the Walb Classic Ballroom will be open to everyone.

In the afternoon, following the keynote presentation, registered workshop participants will learn how they can manage social media for personal and professional use, see how the Writing Center has re-imagined consultations using mobile devices, experience strategies for engaging students in and out of the classroom, learn to easily create and disseminate media, and integrate video into feedback to students. Workshop participants will leave with a strategic plan for using mobile devices to support a teaching goal.

Follett bookstore will graciously provide lunch to workshop participants on Wednesday and Thursday. Each workshop participant completing the 2½ day event will receive a wireless flash drive and will be eligible for a Certificate of Achievement. Registration is limited to 20 participants so be sure to register early at http://www.ipfw.edu/offices/celt/conferences/index.html.

FACEt Corner

By Elliott Blumenthal, Associate Chair, Biology; Associate Professor, Immunology; and Faculty Athletics Representative

The last lunch for 2nd and 3rd year faculty will be April 10, at noon, in WALB G21/G21A. This meeting will discuss managing physical and work environments. Interested Faculty can RSVP to Marcia Dixson or Yvonne Zubovic by Tuesday April 7th.
Innovative Teaching Strategies at the E.C. Moore Symposium on Excellence in Teaching

By Pamela Reese, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders

The E.C. Moore Symposium on Excellence in Learning and Teaching was held at Indianapolis on March 6. I was attending for my first time and was joined by colleagues from IPFW who included Gail Rathbun (CELT); Linda Wright-Bower (MUS) and Dina Mansour-Cole (OLS).

We launched into the morning concurrent sessions: four concurrent sessions of twenty minutes each were scheduled during the next two hours. Presenters from within the Indiana University system, as well as from Ball State, Butler University, and Franklin College spoke on a variety of innovative educational topics.

The first session that I attended was about a classroom space initiative at Ball State. Two classrooms had been changed. One was transformed from a traditional classroom to one with “node chairs” in which students sat facing each other in groups of four, and the second was a computer lab which was changed to a “media scape” room. In the “media scape” room a table was designed to seat six students, each with a personal laptop, and a larger screen for collaborative work. The presenters made suggestions for how to rearrange traditional classrooms and computer labs.

The second session I attended was “What do Images Say about Us?” by Chad Andrews from IUPUI. He showed images that he had found from historic and current advertisements that he used to spark critical thinking in his students. He shared a list of questions that he asked students about the message, the audience, the purpose, and the implications of the advertisement images. One example depicted a man standing with his foot on the head of a tiger-skin rug, only the head was a woman’s head (to advertise men’s pants). He said examining ads are relevant for today’s students.

After that, I went to a session about using academic websites as a presentation strategy for students by Jim Keating and Amanda Starkel from Butler University. They described how groups of five or six students would choose a topic from a semester long theme and create 3-6 web pages for their topic. They shared what they had learned and four semester’s websites can be found at the Butler University web site.

Finally, I attended a session led by Jamie Hamilton from IUPUI about a narrative approach to teaching. She based her teaching strategy on the narrative work of Fisher (1987) and described students using stories to examine different theoretical perspectives in their textbook. With every chapter students write a “snap shot” paper in which students answer a research question, through the lens of the story, but tell their own stories.

The afternoon session continued with the keynote speaker, Dan Bernstein from the University of Kansas. He spoke about his teaching path, giving up lectures twenty years ago and using case studies that he presents to students before they ever read anything about a theory. He described “deep understanding” as being able to remember without memorization and apply the knowledge to a different context. He considered that his use of cases “sets up” students’ brains for understanding theories. He concluded saying that he had found the best student learning comes from quality preparation on the student’s part, which frees up time in class for solving complex problems, practicing problem analysis, writing to learn, and providing informed feedback in real time to a live, better-prepared instructor.

I left the E.C. Moore Symposium with much valuable information on diverse teaching strategies and look forward to returning again.

Opportunities Abound at the 2015 CASTLE Summer Writing and Project Development Institute

By Kimberly O’Connor, Assistant Professor, Division of Organizational Leadership and Supervision

My department chair, Linda Hite (OLS), first brought the summer writing retreat to my attention in 2013, just prior to the start my tenure-track position in the OLS Department. At that time, the retreat was administered by the CELT SoTL Fellow. Having spent time in private practice prior to coming to IPFW, academic writing was a completely new undertaking for me, and the writing retreat proved to be a great place for me to start learning the process.

What I remember most about my first experience at the retreat was that it provided many opportunities for faculty to enhance their writing. Mentors were assigned to participants, and participants were provided guidance and feedback on scholarly research projects. Additionally, there were optional break-out sessions to attend. Break-out session topics ranged from IRB to library databases to developing a scholarly portfolio, among others.

In 2014, IPFW’s CASTLE committee began their oversight of the retreat, and the name was changed to the Summer Writing and Project Development Institute. The format of the retreat, however, remains largely unchanged. One of the biggest benefits for me during both retreats has been the fact that I can have TWO FULL DAYS of uninterrupted writing. No emails, no phones ringing, no distractions…only focused and productive writing.

The other primary benefit that I received was the guidance that my mentor, Michelle Drouin (PSY), gave to me during both retreats. In 2013, Drouin helped me develop the initial draft of what would later end-up being my first accepted publication. During the 2014 Institute, she and I wrote an article together that will be published this May.

In sum, every participant has the opportunity to use the Institute in the way that will be most productive for their own project or writing experience. My story is just one example. I would definitely encourage all tenure-track faculty to consider the Institute as part of their future summer writing plans.
Free Legal Advice: “Man Bites Dog. News at 11:00”

By Kent Kauffman, Esq., Assistant Professor, Business Law

It is axiomatic that, for doctors and lawyers, the risks of being sued by their patients or clients necessitate the malpractice insurance premiums they pay. But as stated in prior columns of “Free Legal Advice,” professors are nearly immune from personal liability to their students for acts that might be thought professionally negligent. Unless an aggrieved student can establish a professor’s professional action was “arbitrary and capricious” or made in “bad faith,”—which is akin to acting malevolently—a professor will not be liable in an educational malpractice claim. That is the common state of things when professors are defendants and their students are plaintiffs.

Occasionally, however, the tables are turned. As shown below, more than a few professors in the past 10 years have sued their students—often for defamation. This “man bites dog” story might be worth a quick view.

• A University of Arkansas—Little Rock law professor sued two students and a student organization for claiming he was a racist because of his teachings on affirmative action in his constitutional law class. The professor dropped the suit after the university publicly affirmed he wasn’t a racist.

• A Queens College undergraduate law professor sued a student who told members of the campus community that the professor was a pedophile.

• A St. Cloud State University history professor sued his campus newspaper for errantly quoting a former student who accused the professor of anti-Semitism.

• A Dartmouth University English professor sued her entire class for their “anti-intellectualism” and for being hostile to her teaching methods (not kidding). She announced her intentions to her students by way of a class email that concluded with “Have a nice day” (still not kidding). She eventually dropped the suit.

• A New York University film-directing professor sued actor James Franco (“Pineapple Express,” “127 Hours”), who was a student in his class, for defaming him and allegedly getting New York University to fire the professor after he gave Franco a D because Franco attended only two class sessions out of 14. Franco eventually settled the case with the professor.

• A University of Wisconsin-Whitewater communications professor sued a former student for libel because of what the student had posted on various online teacher-rating websites, blogs, and YouTube.

Where a professor would sue a student, or anyone, for defamation, a key issue is if the professor qualifies as a “public figure.” If so, the standard for winning the case is much higher. In a traditional defamation case, the false statement (slander for oral statements; libel for everything else) that harms the plaintiff’s reputation or business can be made negligently. But a plaintiff who is a public figure has to prove “actual malice,” namely, that the defendant made the statement knowing it was false, or with a reckless disregard for its truthfulness. Some, including faculty, acquire a level of public prominence and influence they generally are considered public figures. Alternately, whether other professors are public figures for the purposes of defamation is a fact-specific question that, according to a U.S. Supreme Court case involving a professor who sued a U.S. Senator for defamation, turns on whether professors “thrust themselves to the forefront of particular public controversies in order to influence the resolution of the issues involved.”

As it concerns suing any website that is the outlet for a defamatory statement (ratemyprofessor.com, facebook.com, etc.), the federal Communications Decency Act provides complete immunity to Internet Service Providers (ISPs), in that it says: “No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider.” And in cases where plaintiffs have sued ISPs for being defamation conduits, courts have repeatedly honored Congress’s immunity grant.

The Takeaway: Suing a student for defamation is a combustible act: fighting with fire. Before making such a decision, consider the costs—and not just financially. If you qualify as a public figure, whether generally or with respect to the matter over which you are suing, you’ll have to prove the offending statement was made with actual malice. And finally, Internet Service Providers are off-limits.

The opinions expressed here are those of the author, and not IPFW.

1 http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/01/us/01legal.html?_r=0.
6 http://www.ivygateblog.com/tag/priya-venkatesan/.
Upcoming Events

May

2015 Summer Writing and Project Development Institute (CE)
Tuesday, May 12 and Wednesday, May 13, from 9:00 am-4:00 pm on the 4th floor of Helmke Library
The proposal deadline has passed. If you are still interested in submitting a proposal, please contact Stephanie Stephenson in the CELT office (email at stephens@ipfw.edu or call 481-6354)

June

Why Mobility Matters (CE)
June 3, 4 & 5, 2015
Keynote presentation by Dr. Jon Landis, Apple, Inc.
For more information or to register, please see the article on page 1 or visit the Upcoming Conference page of our website at http://www.ipfw.edu/offices/celt/conferences/#upcomingconferences.

August

2015 Fall Teaching Conference: Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching (CE)
Thursday, August 20 in the Walb Classic Ballroom (Room 126)
Mark your calendars and save the date!
Registration and more details to be posted soon!

A workshop denoted as “Certificate Eligible” (CE) means that a participant may apply to receive a certificate in recognition of the time spent attending the event and the effort expended toward applying the content to enhance the participant’s teaching.

To register or view the most up-to-date list of events, visit http://ipfw.edu/celt.

Registration is required for all CELT events.

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