Multimedia lab lights way for classroom content creation

As an instructor, do you ever feel like you are too often “turning your back on” your students as you write on a whiteboard?
Then it’s time to see the light . . . the Lightboard that is.

The LT&ITC has completed a small Multi-Media Studio featuring Lightboard and green-screen capabilities in order to create fresh new classroom audiovisual components for University faculty.
The Lightboard allows educators to write notes or annotate graphics on a large glass wall, creating a video that shows them visible—and their writing readable—from the front.
The room also has a small green-screen studio for creating videos that put objects or even professors into various background. This will allow them to create A/V content tailor-made for their teaching plans rather than borrowing other people's work from online sources like YouTube.

“It’s a place where faculty can come and create content for their courses,” said Kourtney Smith, ITD learning multimedia developer, who has helped oversee creation of the lab.

Faculty Profile: Keith Gamble
Design team invests in personal finance course

When MTSU Professor Keith Gamble decided to create a new online course on personal finance, he knew as an economics expert that he needed more investment of human capital.
So he became one of the first to partner with the LT&ITC Instructional Design Team. And he couldn’t be happier with the course that made its debut online this semester.

“It was hard work,” he said. “I found the team to be first class. . . . I think the result is fantastic.”
Lee Moss, president of Franklin Synergy Bank, speaks about credit and debt in a segment from the new course.

Gamble, chair of the Department of Economics and Finance, came to MTSU from DePaul University in 2016. “My first year here I wanted to find out what resources were available and I went all over the University trying to find out what was possible for faculty to develop and online course,” Gamble said. “I talked to Barbara Draude and . . . she gave me the opportunity as part of a pilot program which would have a team build an online course.”

Draude, ITD assistant vice president of Academic and Instructional Technologies, has been working to develop the course redesign team for the past few years. The effort has begun bearing fruit this year with several faculty members unveiling new online or traditional courses in psychology, astronomy, and now personal finance.

“I love what Barbara has created. There is a great analogy here—when you build a house typically you don’t try to do everything yourself—be architect, construction worker, be foreman, be plumber, be electrician,” Gamble said.

“Basically at MTSU that is what we were asking faculty to do—do everything in the creation of an online course.”

Working “totally from scratch,” Gamble and the team consisting of Learning Multimedia Developer Kourtney Smith, Accessibility Specialist Bill Burgess, and Instructional Technology Specialist Jan Pontia spent hundreds of hours developing the Finance 2010 Personal Financial Planning course.

It consists of seven units featuring an expert in various fields of finance who are interviewed for dozens of 5–7 minute topical videos. Those include Lee Moss, president of Franklin Synergy Bank, speaking about credit and debt, and Jackie Morgan, senior economic and financial education specialist at the Federal Reserve in Nashville, discussing budgeting.

Students learn how to create budgets based on current and projected income based on their career path. It features a free open-source textbook. There are also real-life personal finance scenarios told in storytelling form, with voiceover from Burgess.

"Why I thought this course made a great one for the pilot project is, there is much more emphasis now on educating students in financial literacy and matters of personal finance. It’s much needed," Gamble said.

“I wanted to expand opportunities for students to take this type of course to give them a foundation for making smarter financial decisions throughout their lives.”

The immediate impact was an enrollment jump to 70 students—up from 20 when he taught the course material as a hybrid on-campus/online course in the fall. Many of them were unable to attend traditional classroom courses due to work or child-care issues.

“Comments from students this fall were ‘I love that everything we’re learning I can use in my life. I see how this relates to me and how it can help me,’” Gamble said. “It is a template for building a personal financial plan.”

He is working on expanding access to the course material to the general student population.

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Let’s get back to basics with understandable URLs

Hyperlinks built the internet. Back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, smart people figured out that home computers could connect to a common source of information through a little bit of text, now known as a link. These days, access to most information on the web is governed by links. Even the most amazing search results on Google will provide no benefit if you cannot understand and access the links that the search provides. Those are exactly the issues that people using assistive technologies have on a daily basis.

How helpful would the following results page be if you were trying to switch to an Images search for an MTSU logo?

The link is there, but you can’t tell which one it is. People with a mobility or vision impairment may use assistive software (AT) to access a computer. For this software to be effective, web and document links must be labeled appropriately. Fortunately, there’s an easy and fairly convenient fix, and it just happens to be what search engines do. Links should be a concise phrase that tells the user where the link will take them. How much easier would it be to find the Images search on the following page?

You may wonder why we would bring up links at all as an accessibility issue, if concise phrases are already a norm on the internet. The problem arises when we copy and paste website addresses as links, such as this:

https://www.google.com/search?q=mtsu&oq=mtsu&aqs=chrome.0.69i59j69i60j0l4.399j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

If you look closely, you can possibly tell from the URL above that the link will take you to Google.com and probably do a search for “mtsu,” but it’s difficult to be 100 percent sure.

However, if I create a link that says Google search of “mtsu,” you can be close to 100 percent sure that the link will take you where you are expecting.

Here’s an equivalent experience of someone using assistive technology doing the same Google search but with URLs in place of concise links:

You can probably surmise from the image above that accessibility aids everyone. You can no longer glance at the search results and quickly find the MTSU page that you’re interested in.

Let's maintain a high level of accessibility in our informational and educational resources by inserting URLs behind some concise, meaningful link text.

It takes just a few more seconds than pasting a URL into the body of your document or web page, and everyone benefits.

Bill Burgess, ITD’s instructional accessibility specialist, can be reached at 615-904-8445 or Bill.Burgess@MTSU.edu
Burgess presents on accessibility vocabulary at conference

ITD Accessibility Specialist Bill Burgess was a presenter at the Accessing Higher Ground conference in Boulder, Colorado, Nov. 14–16.

“It was my first experience presenting at a nationwide conference. Here, professionals in the field of disability technologies in higher education meet to share new tools, processes, and information. My contribution revolved around the vocabulary of the accessibility professional,” Burgess said.

Burgess said many terms related to assistive technologies are easily confusable.

“When you set up the paragraph styles in your documents, are you formatting the headers?” Burgess said. “As it turns out, no. Paragraph titles are properly called headings.”

These are shown in the Styles area of Word:

Burgess’s presentation was geared toward professionals who are new to the field of accessible technologies, and a few of the participants said that they wished they had received this information when they started in the field.

“I would next like to take the terms collected from the presentation and turn them into publicly viewable and editable resources, possibly a wiki,” he said.

“Overall, Accessing Higher Ground was a high-quality experience, as usual, and the bonus of presenting made it even better.”

ITD hosts AMX certification training

ITD Client Services hosted an AMX professional level Installer/Commissioner course on campus in December.

“It was a three-day course where we were able to work through a number of hands-on scenarios involving the assembly and configuration of various system types,” said James Copeland, ITD assistant director for Classroom Technology.

“These exercises made us familiar with small A/V systems to larger multi-room systems.

“This course and certification has given use the knowledge and confidence to troubleshoot AMX hardware issues in our typical classroom here at MTSU.”

Those that attended the course and passed the certification exam along with Copeland were:

- Dustin Smith, ITD classroom audiovisual tech
- Justin Foster, ITD desktop/classroom specialist
- Ryne Burden, Media and Entertainment student worker
- Ryan Hines, Basic and Applied Sciences student worker
- Peyton Forrester, Business student worker

Staff members from Networking and Production Services attended the course, but did not take the exam.
Staff Profile: David J. Stevenson

Stevenson enjoys 'variety' in his ITD work, outside interests

If you ask David J. Stevenson about his job responsibilities and outside interests, pull up a chair—the answer is sure to be entertaining and it may take a while.

But ask him for the one word that sums it all up and that will be easy.

"It's definitely a variety," said Stevenson, an ITD Specialist-Web Developer.

He maintains and upgrades public access sites for MTSU's PipelineMT system, which organizes University data including admissions, financial aid, Human Resources, and scheduling.

"I definitely love problem-solving . . . The most challenging thing is priorities—when do we push over the right dominoes?" he said.

"I always have a list of projects I want to get to, or I need to get to and so many times something else will come up. There are always consistent projects we’re working on but then I get emails from faculty members or program coordinators where they need content updates or training.

"So really every week is a little different, which is one reason I like it."

As part of ITD’s web team, Stevenson is involved in major updates or overhauls of University program pages. Most recently they have been working on projects for the MTSU Board of Trustees and Marketing Department, and one for the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

"Right now we’re building a tool for THEC. I am working to put a front-end on a system that’s already in place. We’re trying to automate it—right now it's all manual," he said, adding that this will be used by all universities in the THEC system not just MTSU.

Stevenson joined ITD in September 2016 as web developer in Academic and Instructional Technology Services.

A native of Henderson, Kentucky, Stevenson transferred from the University of Kentucky to MTSU in 2002. He graduated from MTSU in 2005 with a bachelor’s degree in Recording Industry and minors in Computer Science and Mathematics.

Stevenson was a web developer with King Easy Records/Full Light Records 2006-09, and MMA Creative during 2009-12, among other companies. He also was a self-employed web designer, publisher, and site developer.

It's in his time away from work where he shows a range of creative abilities.

Stevenson is a solo singer-songwriter and also frontman for the band Manic Bloom, which has gained exposure on the Jim Rome sports talk show for its song “Lil Alvie D: King of the Jungle.” It also had its music featured regularly on the YouTube trick shot show “Dude Perfect.”

“We haven’t been doing a whole lot just because of life, but we got together recently and just talked about the next project we’re going to do," he said.

He has published three books including two in a series—“The Surface’s End” and “The Dirt Walkers”—which he sells at sci-fi conferences.

He recently finished the third one titled “Victor Boone Will Save Us.” It is about a “reluctant superhero” who uses his powers through an actor. But when the fake superhero is killed, the real one must decide what to do.

Stevenson said he is working to develop a short film based on that novel.

“I’m planning on shooting the first scene of that hopefully here on campus," he said.

Then there are the chickens . . .

“I have just restarted my chicken adventure and I have 21 as of right now," Stevenson said.

The birds are often the subject of his blog, along with his bees.

“I am fascinated with food that makes food.”
LinkedIn Learning has replaced Lynda.com on campus

Lynda.com has become LinkedIn Learning, and MTSU has been working with LinkedIn to facilitate the migration of students, faculty, and staff to this upgraded version. The upgrade took place in January and you should have received an email containing a link with information on how to activate LinkedIn Learning. That link is also provided [here](#). There is a new tile in Office 365 for LinkedIn Learning that is accessible through [portal.office.com/myapps](http://portal.office.com/myapps). The Lynda.com tile will no longer be available. Users will sign in to LinkedIn Learning using their SSO credentials just as they did to Lynda.com. If you have used Lynda.com at MTSU, your learning activity and history will transfer to LinkedIn Learning. LinkedIn Learning meshes the online Lynda tutorials with its data so you can learn new skills based on jobs you are interested in without leaving LinkedIn's platform. When activating your account, you will be provided the opportunity to link your MTSU account with your personal LinkedIn Profile. This is optional and not required to complete your account activation. Find more information on the upgrade at [learning.linkedin.com/cx/lyndaupgrade](http://learning.linkedin.com/cx/lyndaupgrade). If you have any questions or problems during the transition, contact the ITD Help Desk at 615-898-5345 or help@mtsu.edu.

Skype Spotlight: Classroom sessions require some planning

Skype for Business (S4B) provides an excellent opportunity to bring in guest lecturers in various fields, no matter where in the world they are located. But having a successful class S4B session requires more preparation and planning than a simple one-on-one call. There are three main considerations:

- **Good video of the speaker**—To make it an effective session, you will want everyone in class to see the speaker. If you have a small class, this can be done by simply huddling everyone around a computer. But if you have a larger class, you will want to show the speaker on the projector screen.

- **Good video for the speaker**: This one is sometimes overlooked. But for a great exchange, the speaker will need to see your class, especially if you want your students to ask questions.

- **Good audio on both sides**: Obviously you need to hear your guest speaker, but he or she also needs to clearly hear you and your students.

A few weeks in advance, start setting up and testing the S4B connection. You can do this with the planned speaker, or just find a friend or colleague with a Skype setup. If you have never done a Skype session start here: [mtsu.edu/itdtele/skype/video.php](http://mtsu.edu/itdtele/skype/video.php)

As for the technology, the simplest method is to use built-in cameras and microphones on desktops or laptops to connect the S4B session, then run it through your Master Classroom projector and speakers. But while your built-in computer microphone and camera will take care of the basic connection between you and the speaker, you may need some help expanding that to your entire classroom.

Finding the right perspective from which to video your class requires some forethought. The best option is for the guest speaker to be looking at the students as the students are looking straight back at her or him. Videoing the class with a camera placed underneath the projection screen is the simplest way, but will that work? Is that too far away from your computer terminal to connect all the wires? And will that camera perspective be wide enough to show all of your students?

A webcam in one of the corners of the room might be a better approach. You also could group your students in one part of the room or have someone move the webcam around to show various angles as you or students speak. As for audio, the Skype guest should be able to hear everyone in the class through the main microphone used for the connection. If not, you could:

- Have students who want to ask questions walk to the computer to speak closer to the mic.
- Connect a hand-held mic and pass it around (but remember cord length).
- Use a wireless mic located in the middle of the class, but remember that will add another preparation step.

ITD has cameras, speakers, and microphones available to check out if you need more than your computer’s built-in accessories.

ITD staff is available for consultation, setup, and even testing before the live classroom session.

For information email [uc.training@mtsu.edu](mailto:uc.training@mtsu.edu).
IT Tips and Tricks

Popular Snipping Tool changing to consolidate functions

In Windows 7, Microsoft introduced a great little screen-capturing tool called the Snipping Tool.

As shown below, it allowed users to take quick and easy screenshots of whatever is displayed on their computer screen. It is fairly basic and user friendly.

Operation involves simply opening the Snipping Tool, then clicking on New. At that point your computer screen turns a light gray color, and your mouse pointer displays an “X” shape. You then draw a rectangular snip around whatever you want to capture for the screenshot and either save it to your desktop for use later or immediately email it.

After you create the snip, it will display a set of tools something similar to what is seen here:

The main features of it are the pen and highlighter, mode, eraser, and delay.

The pen, highlighter, and eraser are pretty self-explanatory. What’s not too self-explanatory are the mode and delay features. The mode feature gives you the option to change the “snipping box” from a rectangular snip to other shapes.

The delay feature works like a timer on a camera would. It gives you a couple of seconds to get your computer screen situated before it takes the screen capture.

This popular tool opened up a multitude of uses ranging from sending someone a quick screen grab with highlighted portions for review, to creating graphic elements like the ones used in this column.

But changes are coming to the Snipping Tool . . .

In Windows 10, Microsoft is taking the Snipping Tool to the next level with the introduction of Snip & Sketch.

The main difference is Microsoft rebuilt the Snipping Tool to be more user friendly and to remove all the extra steps you had to previously do when you took a screenshot or edited a screenshot you took.

In the Snip & Sketch tool everything is combined into one window.

Microsoft removed the Mode feature so you can only take screenshots using a rectangular snip. It also consolidates the options to take a screenshot (New button”) and the delay feature into one menu item called New as shown below. You only have three options now to take a screenshot: immediately, in 3 seconds, or in 10 seconds.

The editing features appear to be the same as in the Snipping Tool.

Another difference in the Snip & Stretch tool is Microsoft did away of the submenu options. For example, in the Snipping Tool you had to click on the Pen feature, then the pen color, then on customize to do further customizations (i.e., font size).

In the Snip & Stretch tool as soon as you click on the Pen feature everything is displayed right there.

But fans of the Snipping Tool, relax—other than these differences the Snipping Tool and Snip & Sketch are essentially the same application. Microsoft is trying to rebuild the original Snipping Tool to give it a cleaner look in order to make it even more user-friendly.
"It was really a matter of going in and deciding how we could best use this space."

With the Lightboard, "you never have to turn your back on your students," Smith said.

The Lightboard will create A/V materials that can be used in variety of ways by professors, including in-class presentations or online course materials. Annotating is a great option, Smith said.

Annotating allows instructors to import graphics to be overlaid on the Lightboard and then add their handwritten notes to them.

"They don't have to draw everything. For example, they could bring in a graphic of the heart then annotate the parts of the heart," Smith said.

Travis Carter, former videoconferencing technician for University College, designed and built the Lightboard and all its equipment for University College a few years ago.

When the University College relocated and Carter retired, the equipment wasn't used as often. Cindy Adams, manager of Distance Education Faculty Services for the University College, offered it to LT&ITC.

"We moved all the pieces over, and Construction and Renovation added fresh paint, installed new electrical ports, and hung monitors and sound baffling," Smith explained.

With help from Carter and the M3 Technology Group, ITD Assistant Director of Classroom Technology James Copeland installed the Lightboard and all of the related equipment in its new location in the Telecommunications building.

"So James, Travis, and M3 played the major roles in setup of the studio and Lightboard, and we're very grateful to Cindy for University College's gift," she said.

The new multimedia lab is part of the LT&ITC's new instruction redesign initiative. The team offers three levels of service for faculty:

**Level I: Self-service.** Provides instruction in the use of software/hardware/equipment and/or scheduling of time in the multimedia studio (TCM 210) for a faculty to create multimedia resources for instructional use. Level One Studio Products will be self-service, including any post-production work such as editing.

Faculty must complete studio training before booking the studio. A minimum of one month prior to the requested date is required for training and/or scheduling.

**Level II: Project-based.** Provides professional services in the creation of a multimedia product (i.e., a video, audio clip, podcast, graphic, animation, simulation, etc.)

The Instructional Support Team will review all work orders and contact the submitter for more information if needed. If/when approved, the work order will be added to the project queue and a discovery meeting scheduled. A project plan with anticipated start and completion dates will be determined at the discovery meeting. A minimum two months, once the project is approved, should be anticipated for the completion of a project.

**Level III: Course design/redesign via an Instructional Design Team (IDT).** Involves the creation of a team of professionals (faculty member(s), instructional designer/technologist, learning multimedia, accessibility specialist, educational assessment expert) to redesign/design a course including multimedia. (Level III projects accepted by IDT proposal only).

Anyone interested in using the studio can start by contacting the LT&ITC at itanditc@mtsu.edu or 615-904-8189.

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**Digital Signage**

A new outdoor LED Digital Sign project was recently completed at Voorhies Engineering Technology.

It began last August as a senior student project in Engineering Technology to replace an aging clock display.

It was installed and began operating in January, said John Rozell, director of Research/Development Labs.

The sign will promote Engineering Technology events such as the Experimental Vehicles Program, MTSU Robotics Team, and other competitions, as well as various Engineering Technology and Mechatronics Engineering Programs.

Seniors involved were team leader Lucas Adam, Paul Clark, and Colton Adcock. Engineering Technology faculty advisors were Chong Chen and Karim Salman.

The team worked with a Nashville LED sign company, PixelFLEX, to design and fabricate the sign. Terri Carlton, manager of Construction Renovation; Tom Wallace, ITD associate vice president; and Vicky Eastham, manager of Campus Planning, also provided technical support.

System Integrations from Lebanon, Tennessee, provided installation of network cables and support at no cost to the University, Rozell said.