MT recording, chemistry educators win awards for Instructional Technology use

From left Charles Dahan, and Tammy Donham, professors in the Recording Industry Department, and Anatoliy Volkov, associate professor in the Chemistry Department, received the Outstanding Achievement in Instructional Technology Award on Aug. 18.

Offering a smartphone app that helps students study smarter, not harder . . .

Matching music listening habits to spending habits for a marketing campaign . . .

“Flying” through chemical compounds and DNA strands like Luke Skywalker . . .

Three MTSU professors have been honored for those uses of tech in their teaching.

The University’s annual Outstanding Achievement in Instructional Technology Award recognizes faculty members who demonstrate excellence in the development of technology-based teaching materials, and in the integration of instructional technology into the classroom.

The Instructional Technologies Development Committee, consisting of one faculty representative from each undergraduate college, selects the recipients. The award is accompanied by a check for $3,000 from the MTSU Foundation.

The award recipients honored at the MTSU Fall Faculty Meeting held Aug. 18 were:

See educators page 2
Charles Dahan, professor in the Recording Industry Department, for his use of the Cerego study app and Next Big Sound online music analytics program.

He said his History of the Recording Industry class is often difficult because it is so large—about 220 students—and involves memorization of facts involving more than 100 historic figures.

He discovered the Cerego app while taking an online class and knew it would be “incredibly helpful.”

“It lets you customize the content and learning goals to meet the needs of your class,” he told the committee members. “The goal is to have students interact with it for short periods of time. . . . So if you use it a little time each day, when it comes time for exams, you already have half the information in your head!”

Nearly 200 of his students used the free app and in feedback surveys, more than 90 percent said it had helped them learn and retain the subject matter, he said.

It is designed for quick 2-3 minute reviews every day—“It doesn’t want you to cram.”

Dahan, who has worked at MTSU since 2007, spent seven years as the A&R director at Shanachie Records. There he signed and/or worked with artists including the Skatalites, who received two Grammy nominations. Additionally, he co-owns Larchmont Recordings.

The Next Big Sound helped students use online music analytics to determine “what is and isn’t working in an artist’s marketing campaign.”

“It makes them more marketable,” he told the committee.

Tammy Donham, professor in the Recording Industry Department, for incorporating numerous technologies to improve student performance.

Donham, who began teaching in 2013 at MTSU, is former vice president of marketing for the Country Music Association, where she oversaw marketing for the CMA Awards, CMA Music Festival, and CMA Country Christmas events.

“When I started teaching I wanted to bring practical skill sets to the kids . . . and introduce them to tools we were using in the industry,” she said.

Some of the tech programs she has used include:

- Narrated and closed-captioning presentations
- Audio recordings of guest speakers
- Links to videos and other online resources
- Desire2Learn (D2L) discussion boards, Turn It In, and other resources
- Online library subscriptions and databases
- Online graphic design tools
- Live-streaming apps
- Narrated PowerPoints, Periscope, Camtasia, Survey Monkey, Lynda.com, Piktochart, and more

“D2L has become my friend;” she said.

One of her primary resources is the Simmons Database provided through the Walker Library. It is used by media planners and marketers to identify how fans of certain musical styles shop.

“At the end of the semester they are asked to use Simmons to identify the target market for their last major class project—a marketing plan for an album release,” she said.

Donham also likes to use online video to better introduce herself to online students.

“I sometimes feel disconnected from (online) students. I could be walking down the hallway and pass a student and they don’t know me and I don’t know them;” she said.

Anatoliy Volkov, associate professor in the Chemistry Department, for his use of 3D modeling for chemical and biological structures.

The 3D glasses allow him to rotate models at all angles and move in, out, and through them, as well as show the movement of chemicals as they interact with each other.

“The static pictures they see in books are not how molecules behave. Molecules are always in motion and it is always a dynamic process,” he told the committee.

“We hope that when they are looking at these animations, students will get a better conceptual idea of what is going on, and perhaps through the conceptual learning, they will also achieve better content learning.”

He joked that some students see flying in and out of chemical compounds and DNA strands as being Luke Skywalker flying through the Death Star.

The program allows him to build up or break down chemical compounds. He described one atomic reaction as “like playing pool.”

“One atom comes in and pushes the other one out,” he said.

Volkov earned his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Geology with specialization in Geochemistry/Mineralogy/Crystallography from St. Petersburg State University (Russia) and a Ph.D. in Physical/Computational Chemistry from the University at Buffalo, the State University of New York.

Volkov began his teaching career when he joined MTSU in fall 2007.

“It is still not very polished, but we are trying to do our best to introduce these types of animations in our classes,” he said.
Lynda.com access now available for MTSU faculty, staff, students

To hear the talk around MTSU, you might think there is a new teacher on campus named Lynda whose class everyone wants to take.

And you wouldn’t be far off—the University’s new contract with online training website Lynda.com is creating a lot of buzz this fall.

Billy Pittard, chairman of MTSU’s Department of Electronic Media Communications, knows the company’s namesake, Lynda Weinman, and in fact worked for her three years before joining the MTSU faculty in 2011.

He said the campus-wide Lynda.com subscription is a tremendous benefit for educators, staff and especially the University’s nearly 23,000 students. See access instructions at www.mtsu.edu/itd/lynda.

“It’s a tragedy when you have to spend class time teaching software skills, because everyone is at different levels,” said Pittard, who worked at Lynda.com in California during 2008–2011. “This is one of those opportunities to flip the classroom. You can assign learning software skills outside of class, then in class learn how to do something worthwhile with that software.”

Frustrated over the complex, hard-to-follow technical manuals available at the time, Weinman launched Lynda.com in 1995 as a site where students could get free training. Such resources are common today, thanks in large part to her work.

With thousands of training videos, Lynda.com is designed to help anyone learn business, software, technology, and creative skills to achieve personal and professional goals.

Pittard, who developed content and recruited teachers for Lynda.com, said the first step in getting the most out of the website is to learn how to learn from it.

“You can go ahead and browse Lynda.com to get ideas about how you might use the materials for your classes—and also about how you might use them for your own professional/personal development. Lynda.com has excellent search-ability, so give that a try for any specific topics you might be interested in,” Pittard said.

He said his department has been using it for years and envisions a benefit for every campus college.

“You can assign a whole ‘course’ and require the students to earn a certificate of completion. The subscription includes the ability to download all materials used in the course videos,” he said.

The benefit for MTSU students from this subscription will be long-lasting, he said, both for their education and subsequent career. An individual subscription to Lynda.com costs hundreds of dollars.

“When I was working at Lynda.com, it was amazing to me the feedback we got from subscribers. A total stranger would walk up and say, ‘So you work at Lynda.com?’ I would say, ‘Yeah.’ They would say, ‘I got my job

See Lynda.com on page 8

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How to make MTSU classroom content, presentations ADA-accessible

The University is committed to making all classroom content and official publications compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements for accessibility.

But how to do it is often the challenge, said Jimmy Williams, instructional technology specialist for the MTSU Information Technology Division.

Williams’ mission is to answer that question, whether one-on-one or addressing large groups, as he did in July at a conference in Washington, D.C.

There is an ongoing effort this fall to make all syllabi accessible, and ITD is offering accessibility training through workshops and consultations.

The following is a summary of Williams’ best advice on creating ADA-accessible content, whether for curriculum, presentations, or publications.

Universal Document Structure

The key is Universal Document Structure, he said.

Document structure is not limited to a single program. It is a universal concept that translates to any document that you create in any program. The following information shows some of the best practices for creating accessible content.

Keep in mind: Accessible content is not only geared to toward people with a disability; it can be used by anyone and should aid how content is accessed by everyone.

Three rules for accessible content:
- Make sure that the text is renderable—that the text is able to be read by a screen reader for accessibility by readers with a disability.
- Have a Heading Hierarchy in place. This is how screen readers navigate a document.
- Make sure that all tables, figures, and graphics have alternative descriptions. Alt descriptions are a way for the end-user to better understand all of the information that you want them to access.

More on ADA accessibility

For more information, contact Williams at James.Williams@mtsu.edu or 615-898-2140.

The TBR Accessibility Training Course is a very helpful resource, giving faculty and staff access to numerous forms of accessibility training. Register at mtsu.edu/fitc/accessibility.php.

Renderable Text

How do you make sure the text is renderable? In order for a screen reader to read the text in a document, the text has to be able to be read.

Any document can be made so that the text is renderable, even scanned PDFs. Microsoft Word, RTF files, and HTML are all inherently renderable.

HTML is the preferred medium because it can be accessed by any device and does not require a specific program for accessibility.

Here is how to check whether a PDF is accessible:
- If you click within the document and the entire thing turns blue—It is not accessible
- If you try to copy text and you can’t select the text to copy—It is not accessible
- If you try to put your cursor between two letters and no cursor appears—It is not accessible
- If you can put the cursor between two letters and a blinking cursor appears—It is accessible
- If you can copy selected text—It is accessible

Simply because some of the text is renderable, it doesn’t mean that the entire document is renderable.

The only way to make non-accessible text renderable is by running an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) scan,
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pictured below. Adobe Acrobat Pro has a built-in OCR. It differentiates one letter from the next and allows a screen reader to access it.

Headings

People who use screen readers use the headings to navigate a document the same way that we use our eyes to decide where we need to start reading.

Think of it in terms of a book:

1. Title of the book—Heading level 1
2. Chapters—Heading level 2
3. Sections in the chapters—Heading level 3

Most people already use some sort of heading structure in their content, whether by making the font larger, bolding, or by some other means to differentiate it from the rest of the text. But there are tags that are put into a document when you actually label a heading as a heading.

In the graphic above, you see the location of the heading tags in Microsoft Word. (Keep in mind that this is universal. In most editor programs, there will be an option to the select the heading levels.) You can also select the text that you want to make a heading and then select the heading level that you want to designate.

There are up to six different heading levels but best practices dictate that you not go any further than heading level 3. If you feel that you need to go further, it would be best to “chunk” the information—divide it into smaller groups.

Alternative Descriptions

Any kind of picture, figure, or table can and should have an “alt description.” An alt description is the text that best describes the picture and what you want the user to get out of it. There are three types of descriptions:

- Short Description—Anything that is not very in-depth.
- Long Description—More in-depth than the Short Description, usually a 3-4 sentences.
- Very Long Description—More in depth than the Long Description and usually will be up to a paragraph long.

How do I add Alt Text Descriptions?

In MS Word and PowerPoint the process is the same (see graphic above).

Right click on the picture and choose Format Picture (the last option on the dropdown). Choose the Layout and Properties icon on the right. Then select the Alt Text link.

In PDFs, using Adobe Acrobat Pro, you right click on the picture and select Edit Alternate Text. In HTML, most editors give you a text box whenever you add an image or you could go in and code the “<alt=put your description here>”

In this example, the Alt Description lists could be:

- Short Description—Simply “Koala Bear”
- Long Description—More in-depth description from a source that is an expert on koala bears.
- Very Long Description—Extremely detailed word picture, such as a Zoology professor talking about every aspect of the koala bear. (This description is better suited in the body of the text and the description for the picture should read: “The description is located below or above.”)

Finally, descriptive Hyperlinks, illustrated below, are a way to add hyperlinks to a page without just pasting a URL.
“Boot Camp” instructor helps faculty de-stress over online teaching

Scott Haupt teaches at the Desire2Learn (D2L) Boot Camp in August. It helps faculty members use D2L to develop online courses that let them “facilitate rather than dictate.”

When it comes to helping MTSU faculty use online tech to teach, the problem isn’t finding a program to use. Often it’s choosing between too many of them, said Scott Haupt, instructional design specialist for the Information Technology Division.

“Online course development can be stressful,” he said. “It’s just unfamiliar terminology for a lot of people, but once they get their feet wet they are fine. A lot of times they’ll come in and ask me about 15 different technologies that aren’t even related to where they are trying to get the students to go. I am trying to get them to focus on the outcomes they want.”

“I try to help them look through all the tools that are available.”

The right tool for the job in most situations is Desire2Learn (D2L). In one-on-one consultations or workshops, he teaches faculty members how to use its collaboration-building features—especially ePortfolio—to help them “facilitate rather than dictate.”

He encourages faculty members, especially new ones, to sign up for what’s known as the D2L Boot Camp. Despite the name, Haupt said he and the other instructors are not drill sergeants.

“They’ve got enough to worry about so I try to help them de-stress a little bit,” he said.

D2L opened to students a little earlier this fall, with a goal of getting students caught up on course materials.

“Some professors want their students to do some reading and be more familiar with the materials before they come in, so they can hit the ground running the first day.”

In addition to helping find the most effective program, Haupt helps ensure cyber security and student privacy in developing online courses.

“There are myriad options that will or won’t compromise student information. It is nice to keep it housed within D2L, then they (students) can choose who gets it and who doesn’t,” he said.

Originally from Virginia, Haupt graduated from Virginia Tech with a degree in English and worked in curriculum development for K-12 in that state before moving to middle Tennessee. He got his master of education from MTSU, with a concentration in Curriculum and Instruction.

He worked as curriculum development manager for the Tennessee Fire Service and Codes Enforcement Academy in Bell Buckle from September 2013 to April 2015, when he joined ITD.

Now his wife, Melanie, is earning her Ph.D. in Mathematics and Science Education at the University. They live in Murfreesboro with their children, Alex, 10, and Madison, 4.

Haupt can be reached at 615-898-2061 or Scott.Haupt@mtsu.edu.

ePortfolio ready for MTSU

As part of the renewed Desire2Learn (D2L) Brightspace contract, ePortfolio has been activated and is available for use by students and faculty.

D2L’s Brightspace Learning Environment provides educators flexibility to tailor the learning process to match their own unique approach and provides tools to help facilitate communication, collaboration, and community-building with students.

The ePortfolio allows students to present what they’ve learned in “mini-websites.”

This collection of digital “artifacts”—reports, publications, videos, audio files, photos, web links, etc.—can then be shared with prospective employers, graduate schools, and others.

Support materials have been developed, and workshops on using ePortfolio are available. Click here to register or get more information.

Questions on ePortfolio, can also addressed to the FITC (8189) or the LT&ITC (7671). For online tutorials, visit mtsu.edu/d2lsupport/eportfolio/index.php.
Digital signage is a great way to highlight departmental activities.

In these examples from the Science Building, the Biology and Chemistry Departments use building signs to issue an invitation to student research presentations, enroll in a field experience course, or see the research being done with equipment such as scanning electron microscopes.

For more information about MTSU's digital signage network or make content suggestions, contact digicontent@mtsu.edu.

Williams presents at D2L Fusion

Jimmy Williams, ITD instructional technology specialist, was a presenter at the Desire2Learn Fusion conference held in Washington, D.C., on July 18-19, 2016.

Williams gave a presentation titled “How to Create Accessible Content in D2L.”

“I was the first scheduled workshop for the day and was then able to attend all of the other workshops that were being offered,” he said.

Williams’ presentation was titled “Creating and Accessing Accessible Content in Brightspace.” He shared the various ways to make content accessible and best practices.

“I have been teaching this type of workshop since I first started working at MTSU two years ago. I gained this experience from working at Student Disability Services at the University of Mississippi. The workshop went well and I felt that everyone walked away with more knowledge than they had coming in,” he said. “The conference itself was a huge learning experience for me. It was really interesting to see how other colleges are using D2L and what other administrators were responsible for within their systems.

“I am very thankful that I work for a university that will send their employees to this type of training. That way they have the newest information to share with their faculty and keep the University ahead of the rest.”

Other workshops he attended were:

- Gamification: What is it and How Do I Incorporate it in My Course Delivery?
- Bridging the Gaps: Third Party Integrations in Brightspace
- Educational Game Design
- Reimagining Portfolio Practice
- Start Designing a Badging Program
- Hands on with Brightspace Leap
- Beyond Artifacts—Implementing Brightspace As A Reflective Learning Tool
- Predicting Student Risk with Brightspace

“My family decided that we would take a vacation around the conference so that we could experience all the history that is in Washington, D.C.”

MTSU Faculty Fair set for Oct. 26

The annual MTSU Faculty Fair will be 1–4 p.m. Oct. 26 in the Learning, Teaching, and Innovative Technologies Center (LT&ITC) in Walker Library Room 348.

At this open house event, faculty can learn about grant opportunities, innovative pedagogical strategies, student success initiatives, support for faculty professional development, and much more.

In addition to sharing more about the many services and resources available, the event will recognize MTSU faculty members who earned the LT&ITC’s Faculty Fellows designation for 2015–16:

- Catalina Palacios
- Echell Eady
- Eric Oslund
- Gloria Green
- Heather Dillard
- Kate Pantelides
- Kevin Krahenbuhl
- Kristin Naylor
- Lauren Rudd
- Richard Tarpey
- Ryan Korstange
- Zhen Wang

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Mathematica 11 now available

Mathematica 11 is now available to faculty and students through the MTSU site license.

Mathematica is an online or desktop resource for coursework and academic research in any field that requires computation or visualization, including math, science, engineering, computer science, and finance.

It is also commonly used for prototyping ideas and data analysis in industry. For a complete list of new features and enhancements in Mathematica 11, visit [wolfram.com/mathematica/new-in-11](http://wolfram.com/mathematica/new-in-11).

Due to a limited number of site licenses available, students should talk to their instructors about access.

Mathematica developer Wolfram is hosting free web-based training sessions for students or anyone new to the website. Visit [wolfram.com/training/special-event/hands-on-start-to-mathematica](http://wolfram.com/training/special-event/hands-on-start-to-mathematica).

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**Lynda.com, continued from page 3**

because of Lynda.com," he said.

“For someone trying to learn a piece of software, I honestly don’t think there is a better way.”

Michael Wheaton, assistant to the director of library technology at the James E. Walker Library, has already discovered that.

“I was trying to figure out how to make a YouTube video accessible to people with hearing disabilities. I was having trouble figuring out how to caption a video,” he said.

He did a quick Lynda.com search for “captioning YouTube video” and 3 minutes later was doing it.

“I didn’t have to sit through a long lecture that covered way more than I needed to accomplish that task. Instead, I received exactly the dose of information needed,” Wheaton said. “Because Lynda.com tracks progress by user, it allows larger training packages to be broken into manageable chunks based upon the amount of time available, and when it is convenient, students return right where they left off.”

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**Skype For Business Switch Update**

To date, more than 1,000 users have been migrated to MTSU’s Skype for Business system.

ITD Telecommunication Services continues to deploy Skype for Business on a building-by-building basis. As buildings are identified, departmental meetings are scheduled to develop a migration strategy on a departmental level.

Current and upcoming migrations are listed below. For a complete listing of buildings already migrated, or for additional information on the Skype for Business project, please visit the Skype for Business website at [mtsu.edu/itdtele/skype.php](http://mtsu.edu/itdtele/skype.php).

For training on Skype for Business, sign up for a workshop at [www.mtsu.edu/itd/workshops.php](http://www.mtsu.edu/itd/workshops.php).

Following is a deployment update:

**In Progress**
- Tom Jackson Building
- Vocational Agriculture
- Housing (Dorms and Administration)
- Cason-Kennedy Nursing Building
- Student Recreation Center
- Jones Hall
- College Heights Building
- Ezell Hall
- Bragg Media and Entertainment
- College of Education
- Wood-Stegall Center

**Upcoming**
- Alumni Memorial Gym
- Bayer-Travis Maintenance Building
- Central Services Building
- Central Utility Plant
- Hastings Maintenance Complex
- Holmes Building
- Haynes-Turner Building
- Tennessee Center for Study of Dyslexia
- Forrest Hall
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- Davis Science Building
Help students not miss the vote

University faculty can help make sure students don’t miss the vote this fall, and several tech resources are available to aid in that effort, said Mary Evins, coordinator of the MTSU American Democracy Project.

“We encourage you to provide your students with Tennessee voter registration forms and to assist them in registration. Completed forms should be returned to the American Democracy Project office; we will file them with the state,” she said in an email.

If students—or faculty—have already registered to vote somewhere before coming to campus, they can transfer that registration to Rutherford County by:

► Submitting the voter registration form to the county election commission office, just down Main Street on Courthouse Square. Get more info at election.

rutherfordcountytn.gov.

► Downloading and mailing the application to the local county Election Commission office. That office will notify your previous voting location of the transfer. Or they can vote back in their home county, either:

► By-mail absentee. A voter enrolled as a full-time student in an accredited college or university outside the county of registration can do this.

► In-person—either on election day, or during an early voting period.

If you aren’t registered anywhere, your choices are fairly simple: Register back home or in Rutherford County. You can do this either in person or by mailing in the form.

Evins believes registering to vote in-person locally is the best option and because of fall break, students should do so by Oct. 7.

“Student voting studies definitively inform us that students who do not register locally do not vote; they don’t make it home to the polls. We want our students to register and to vote this fall,” she said.

To get Tennessee mail-in voter registration forms, email ADP at amerdem@mtsu.edu with your campus box number and number of forms you need. Or a form can be downloaded at sos.tn.gov/node/5996.

IT Tips & Tricks

rename a group of files in OS X Yosemite

If you have a cluster of files to rename in OS X, it used to require one of three things:

• Tedious individual naming
• A third-party app
• Or some Automator wizardry

Instead, just highlight your files, right-click and select the Rename Items options in the contextual menu. Then select Format in the dropdown to apply a neat new nomenclature to the whole list.

Telephone Tidbits

Conferencing is easy as 1-2-3 with Skype for Business. Integration with Microsoft Outlook allows you to schedule and join meetings with a click of the mouse.

• Schedule your meeting—Outlook adds your conferencing information into the body of the meeting invite automatically.

• Join your meeting—Double-click the meeting from your Outlook calendar, then click Join Skype Meeting.

• Enhance your meeting—Add video or share content, using embedded controls in the Skype for Business client.

For more information, visit ITD Telecommunication Services' website at mtsu.edu/itdtele/skype.php, or register for training at mtsu.edu/itd/workshops.php.