

Using MS Producer in a Beginning Programming Course

**Corrine Brown
Ohio University
College of Business
Copeland Hall
Athens, OH 45701
740-593-1987
brownc@ohio.edu**

Introduction

After attending presentations on Camtasia and Producer at the 2005 ASCUE conference, I decided to try and integrate these products into the presentation of materials in a beginning programming course.

Today's students are the "web generation" and their expectations are different than past generations.(1) Combining the rich media presentations common to online courses with the material presentation of a traditional course into a hybrid class integrates the 24x7 availability of the web with the face-to-face contact of traditional classes. The impact of the introduction of rich media presentations was measured by student evaluations before and after their inclusion in the course. The results as measured by student evaluations were phenomenal. This paper discusses the philosophy behind the production of the rich media presentations and reports the results. The conference presentation will demonstrate how to develop a rich media presentation using Microsoft Producer and demonstrate presentations used in the course.

Case Study

The beginning programming course for MIS majors in the College of Business uses VB.NET in the ASP.NET 2.0 environment. The students develop interactive web pages using Microsoft's Visual Web Developer. The basic programming constructs that are typically found in a beginning programming course are covered. Since the course covers the development of web applications rather than Windows applications, there are very few materials available from traditional book publishers at the beginning programming level. Customized materials were developed to meet the needs of the course. Microsoft Producer was used to create rich media presentations which were distributed to students over the web. All students have access to Windows XP machines and high speed Internet connections. Distributing the rich media presentations from the course web site is appropriate for the student population taking the course. MS Producer was chosen because it is a free download (3) and there was a short learning curve needed to develop materials. Using the screen capture function, an application was developed as the instructor explained the concepts being illustrated. The rich media presentation was customized for a given business scenario and covered the design of the user interface, programming constructs, documentation, and logic in a step-by-step process. Students developed websites for business scenarios such as on-line retailers, reservation systems and order entry systems. Students were required to watch the presentation and create the same website as demonstrated in the rich media materials. Presentations could be stopped, paused, or advanced which allowed students to cover material as many times as needed. Anecdotal comments from students indicated that they preferred the presentations to be fifteen to twenty minutes in length. Even though they could stop and start

again at a later time the preference was for the rich media content to be broken down into smaller segments and presented to them in the order they were to be completed. Students watched the presentation when it was convenient for them, not at a time imposed by class scheduling. It was not uncommon to see time stamps of very early morning hours for assignments posted to the student server. Some students seem to prefer working at 3:00am, others prefer midnight and a few worked in the afternoon. Each student engaged in the learning process on their schedule. Each student “self-selected” the appropriate time to engage in the learning process. Kolb suggests that the learning process is filled with tension.(2) Making the learning activity available to students when they choose to engage in the learning process provides an opportunity to reduce the tension and conflict inherent in learning.

Prior to the rich media presentations, student absences would increase as the material became more difficult. But after the introduction of the rich media presentations, class absences were virtually non-existent. The types and level of questions asked in class indicated a deeper understanding of the material, moving from “how to do something” to “what would be the effect” level.

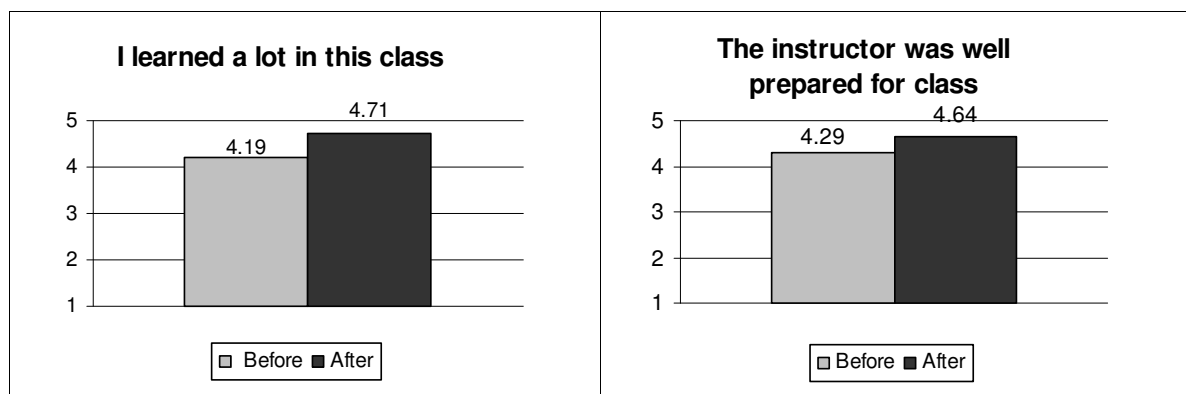
Results

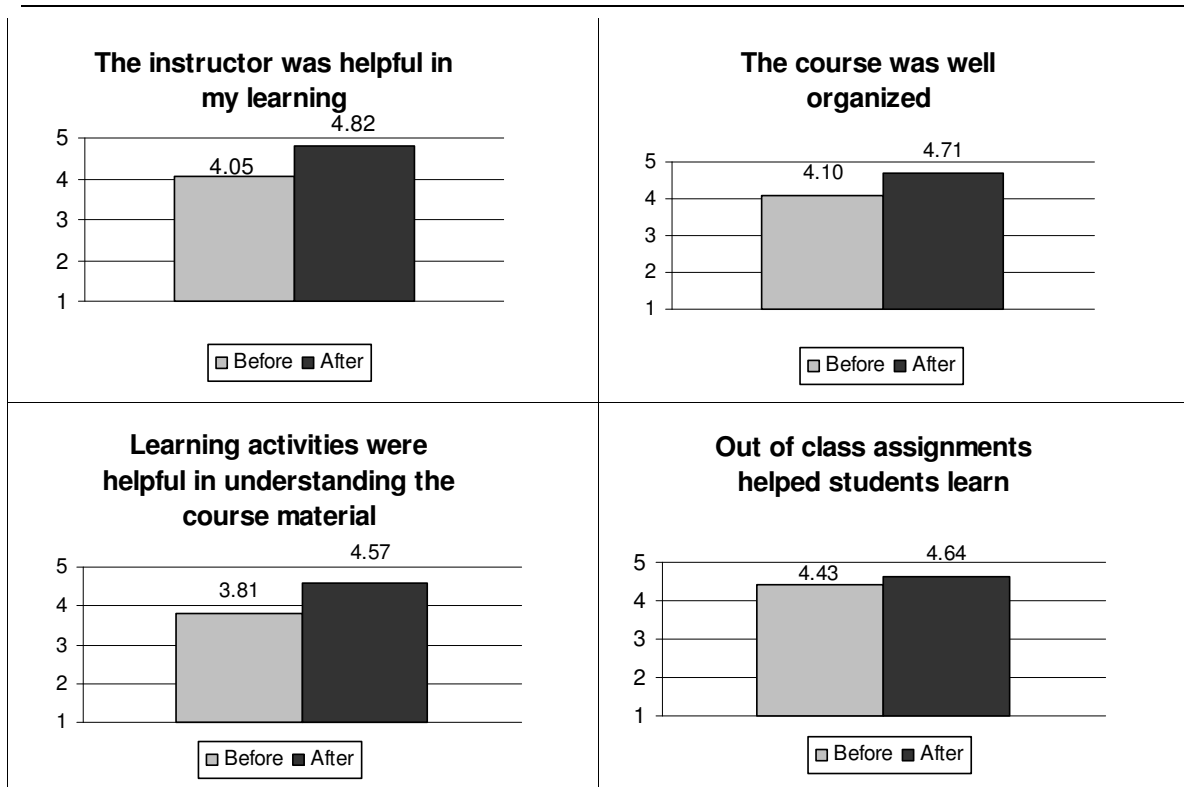
The results from two courses are shown below. The courses had the same instructor, the same written notes and assessments and were offered at the same time of day. The difference between the two courses was the introduction of the rich media presentations.

The student evaluations are measured on a five point Likert scale as shown:

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neutral
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree.

The results of student evaluations from courses before and after the introduction of rich media presentations are shown below.





Summary

The results of the student evaluations indicate the introduction of rich media presentations has been very successful. Evaluations reflect increases in student perceptions of the usefulness of learning activities, the amount students' learned, the helpfulness and preparation of the instructor, as well as the organization of the class.

References

1. Johnstone, S.M., Ewell, P., Paulson, K. (2002). *Student Learning as Academic Currency*. American Council on Education Center for Policy Analysis. Available <http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/distributed-learning/distributed-learning-04.pdf>
2. Kolb, David A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
3. Microsoft. [online], Available <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=1b3c76d5-fc75-4f99-94bc-784919468e73&DisplayLang=en>