Authentic and Industry-Focussed Delivery and Assessment in a Blended Learning Environment

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Project Goals

We seek **fluid mechanisms** to integrate contributions from **industry experts** through distance learning – a strategy not yet developed by existing face-to-face industry driven modules in ALSS.

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Background

- The **MAs in Children’s Literature** and **Science Fiction and Fantasy** are:
  - newly validated;
  - interdisciplinary;
  - blended learning (distance education and campus residency);
  - bespoke design for the new LMS (Canvas);
  - invested in non-traditional, industry-oriented assessments alongside traditional research essays.
Challenges

• **Securing Content:**
  • identifying, contacting and preparing industry experts

• **Using the Tech:**
  • filming, editing and preparing the media itself

• **Testing the Pedagogy:**
  • integrating the media into the delivery of the module

• **Determining Feasibility:**
  • integrating the teaching materials effectively into Canvas, at a technical level
Case Study – Publishing: The Making of Genres

• In this module students explore the history of science fiction and fantasy publishing whilst considering and investigating key industrial issues in effectively developing and distributing this genre of fiction.

• The first half of the course provides an historical context, including consideration of key individuals who were internationally important in the development of the genre.

• Assessment 1: An historical case study of one science fiction or fantasy publishing enterprise (to be submitted in June) (1500 words).
Challenges

• relatively little academic research to date addresses the subject;
• requires use of primary sources or non-traditional sources;
• knowledge is industry-focused, not always accessible to researchers.

Opportunities

• teaches students to understand how literary culture is shaped by publishers as well as authors;
• requires critical thinking to discover and evaluate sources;
• fosters an authentic understanding of the operations of the industry.
Patrick Nielsen Hayden: A Case Study Of The Growth Of Tor Books

Click on the link below in order to listen to an interview between Dr. Helen Marshall and Patrick Nielsen Hayden, discussing the founding and development of Tor Books.

Questions

Who first founded Tor Books and how did he start?
What sorts of books did Pocket Books specialise in? What key series did they have the rights for?
What did Tom Doherty do after Pocket Books?
What was the problem with Ace Books?
What I Did

• arranged and conducted an audio-only interview with Patrick Nielsen Hayden, the editor-in-chief of Tor Books, at the World Science Fiction Convention in Helsinki;
• edited the interview in some places for coherence and linearity;
• created a dedicated page on Canvas, with guiding questions; a biography; and additional external resources for follow-up;
• linked to the interview from the assessment guidelines;
• integrated a section of the interview into an online lecture;
• created a sample version of Assessment 1, using the resource.
Advantages of Audio-Only

• easier to edit for sense and clarity with a speaker whose responses were less structured;
• easier to facilitate in terms of tech and set-up, particularly for an off-site interview;
• less resource-intensive for Canvas where space is limited.

Disadvantages of Audio-Only

• less visually stimulating;
• less effective for certain learning (or teaching) styles.
Other Options Tested

• Canvas’s “Conference” tool for distance education induction;
• pre-recorded audio-only interview with questions solicited from students and light editing;
• extended video interview on-site at Gollancz Books offices;
• short video interviews compiled;
• Twitter Q&As;
• recorded live audio-only interview at hosted event;
• guest lecturers in the classroom.
Content Questions
• briefing of interviewee;
• quality/feasibility of editing;
• Interactivity;
• uniformity of product.

Technological Questions
• cost of tech;
• portability of tech;
• quality/size of final product;
• knowledge/skill required.

Pedagogy Questions
• accessibility;
• suitability for different learning styles;
• re-usability/adaptability;
• knowledge transfer.

Feasibility Questions
• quality of recording venue;
• cost to update materials;
• co-ordination team;
• production time.
Conclusions

• External speakers can provide up-to-date knowledge but must be briefed effectively.

• Production can be time-intensive.

• Static materials are best presented alongside additional resources to encourage interactivity (guided questions, facilitated discussions, etc.)

• These teaching materials ask students synthesize multiple, sometimes contradictory, perspectives in order to come to full understanding.

• Lecturers should be aware of their access to technology, their own technical know-how, and the limitations of the recording space.

• Resources limitations should be understood and accounted for.