

## Debra Lowe: Internship Journal

First Quarter Journal: July 1 – August 3, 2009

99 hours 57 minutes

### **7/01-7/02      Hours 9:29**

I almost feel like I should go back to the beginning of my time at IT-IS (formerly FACT). I wish I could remember the steep learning curve in those first few weeks, but it has all become second-nature now. I started off July by working on COMD, or communication disorders 3500. This course deals with phonetics. One of the chief things I do at the IT-IS office is translate courses from their former styles into an updated template. This allows the courses to be more easily used by sight-impaired learners.

I finished the 3500 update on Wednesday, which included making sure all of the links work, the discussions and exams are all uploaded and working, and the course looks good. It took me several days to update this course, and Wednesday was the day I finished. I then proceeded to the COMD 4660 course.

I previewed the COMD 4660 course (Introduction to Deafblindness). This course was a straightforward transition from the old template to the new. Because there were nearly no changes, this was quickly and easily put into Blackboard, only taking a day or two. I hadn't finished before the Independence Day holiday, so it sat for the weekend.

### **7/06-7/10      Hours 20:24      Subtotal 29:53 hours**

I finished transferring the content to COMD 4660 (Introduction to Deafblindness). To do this, I must create a "blank" course from the template. There is a place-holder for a quiz, discussion, assignment and the main html page. I use the administrator role to start the course, and then move into the design phase. This allows me to build the course, either from scratch, or from the new template created by John Louvier, an Instructional Designer who is responsible for the COMD courses.

I created a step-by-step guide for designers using the template. When I first started, I had to build dozens of courses. They were fairly easy, but as I was new, I needed instructions. As I got used to working in the Blackboard environment, I wrote a guide for myself. This has been very useful when creating more complex courses.

Courses are primarily built in Dreamweaver, with quizzes, assignments and discussions built within Blackboard itself. I spent the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> gathering materials (pdf documents, etc.) and uploading them, then building the structure of the course. Learning modules will be constructed after assignments and discussions. Once the course has reached this stage, the unit pages are ready to be built.

This week I finished COMD 4660, and started COMD 5070. COMD 5070 is a speech science course. The graphics were already created, and this was another course that needed updating and placed within the new template's format. I proceeded into the course, downloading the media files and organizing the materials.

At this point, I was at a crossroads where I needed to get advice on how to proceed. John wasn't in when I needed him on Thursday, so I stopped by the desk of Neal Legler. He had me work on making XML files for the beginning MUSC (Music) classes. There were two CDs, each with 99 brief tracks. Each one needed an XML entry, and although it was pretty easy. It took forever, or at least it seemed like it. I worked on the XML files until John came back, and then I was able to complete the COMD 5070 course and send the files to John by Friday.

**7/14-7/17**      **Hours 22:47**      **Subtotal 52:40 hours**

I started in on Tuesday morning back into the XML files. Working on tedious tasks such as typing song and artist names would get terribly old in a short time if it weren't for the perks of working in the FACT (oh, by the way, the IT-IS name change was cancelled, and it is now FACT again). Almost all of the programmers and instructional designers listen to music or movies while working. I put on some up-tempo music and started hammering away at the files. I worked all Tuesday and Wednesday, and well into Thursday on the XML files. They needed to be fully annotated with details about the musical tracks. Finally, on Thursday, I had finished creating all 198 entries, and could send the files to Neal.

On Thursday, I was assigned COMD 7320 and COMD 7340. I started work on 7320. This class needed to be updated and restructured. It had a unique style, and I wanted to preserve as much as that as possible. The colors and text were unique, so I modified the graphics that were available to fit into the template. By Friday, I had completed the graphics, uploaded the files, built the learning modules and had finished Unit 1. I had another question, and John was at yet another meeting, so I helped Carrie Dabb complete a small task and helped George Joeckel re-format the Human Geography course by updating the assignments with the page numbers of the newest version of the text.

**7/20-7/22**      **Hours 17:47**      **Subtotal 70:27 hours**

I wish I had taken detailed notes of this week, but all (nearly) 18 hours were spent on COMD 7320. This course has ten units, and each one had to be constructed. Sadly, to transfer a course from the non-template version to the updated version, not everything can be cut and pasted. New links must be made, link structure changed, and the order of items are different. Even with all of that said, it doesn't take too long, if everything goes well. Each course is very different though, and there are always unexpected problems.

This course had some videos on the Blackboard server. All of these needed to be moved to the new server for media. Quizzes also needed to be updated. This course took a few days, but with no major problems. The instructor had laid things out well beforehand, so things went smoothly. I've noticed that the more organized the course is ahead of time, the quicker it will transfer to the new format. I had just enough time to start looking at COMD 7340, Pediatric Audiology.

**7/27-7/31**      **Hours 22:27**      **Subtotal 92:54 hours**

The Pediatric Audiology was created by the same instructor that created 7320. This course was an entirely different experience from her previous one. The original course was older and needed more

changes than the earlier course. The graphics desired for this course were more intense, and all the wrong size. The front page remained the same as in the previous course, and the graphics were built, but needed modification. This course had the added challenge of new assignments, significant changes in reading assignments, added sections, and a good amount of restructuring. It took time to look through the old course and find out what needed to be transferred over. By the end of that Tuesday, I had managed to roughly frame the course, built most of Unit 1, and had created the first three quizzes.

I found out that I, and several other designers, must design the appearance and aesthetics of the course before we can begin on the content. I had to build the purple banners and baby pictures before I could get into the course. It makes the course look complete when the page is done. If the content is in place, but not the graphics, it always seems more... empty or incomplete.

By the end of the week, all of the quizzes had been built, and Units 1-5 had been updated. Several videos had to be downloaded (Camtasia/Flash videos) to be uploaded elsewhere. I had also started a log for this course detailing questions I had about the changes required. The instructor did not always use full sentences, and although it was obvious that she knew what she wanted, I was unfamiliar, and needed to ask a few questions. I conveyed my concerns with John Louvier, instructional designer for the COMD courses.

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<b>8/03</b>	<b>Hours 7:03</b>	<b>Subtotal 99:57 hours</b>
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On this Monday, I started off with the team meeting. Some things pertain to me, but there were many conversations which were more applicable to the full-time employees. At the meeting I learned of a meeting between the instructor of the COMD course I was creating, John Louvier, and me. John also was looking for some clarification, and set up this appointment. I worked a little on her course, and printed off my list of questions.

That morning we met with the instructor, and I found it very helpful. By speaking with her, I was better able to understand how she thinks, and I was better able to see how the course looked from her point of view. This clarified many of the questions I had, and I was directly able to ask others. I believe that this was also very useful for her, because she didn't understand that some of the terminology wouldn't be readily understood by a course novice. She also had readings from the book, articles online, and in-class handouts. I was able to find out where all of these articles were located, and she was able to find better ways to organize her readings.

That afternoon, I worked through Unit 7 of COMD 7340. I was getting frustrated with this course, because on a completely ready and structured course, I can put it online in a day or two. This course wasn't as kind to me. Units 6 and 7 were complex, and multiple weeks were contained within single units. Also, that afternoon I was sent half a dozen emails from the instructor giving me updates and new items to upload. I was able to get all of these done that day.

### **Summary for first 100 hours**

Again, it would have been nice to have kept a journal of those first days on the job, rather than starting in the middle. As the days go by, I find that certain tasks become almost second nature to me. I suppose it's that way in any job. I do like the feeling of being a working cog instead of a needy student. I'm learning that I prefer the quiet business to the feeling of being trained.

I am most definitely gaining a preference for instructors (subject-matter experts). Those that can give me something concrete to work with, and who are intellectually organized are my heroes at the moment. The instructors who are only abstract, those who do not know what they want, or those who are capricious and disorganized are supreme frustration to me. I do believe I will be teaching again in the future, and this has definitely influenced the structure of how I will teach and present materials.