

Debra Lowe: Internship Journal 3

Third Quarter Journal: September 1, 2009 – October 2, 2009

100 hours 2 minutes

Total hours on Internship: 304:01

9/01-9/03 Hours 13:43

This week was all about helping Dr. Lowanto with more guided notes for his electrical engineering class. I find that when I want to do something well, it often takes me longer to do it. The handouts are no exception. It takes a long time to make a handout. All charts and equations have to be hand-created. While (thankfully) Dr. Lowanto's handwriting is excellent, it still takes a bit of effort to get a hand-written equation to transform into a slick, digital copy. Every page took me between an hour or two, and each handout was about 14 pages, so I was only able to get three handouts done, but I'm making progress.

I have decided that I like the design and creativity aspects of this job, and can handle the tedium rather well, but I still do miss people. Life in a cubicle does not always agree with me. I am a social animal, and sociality in the cube farm is a bit lacking. Usually the work is a bit mundane, but I can deal with that. It's a good job, even if it is a bit... lonely.

9/8-9/11 Hours 19:27 Subtotal 33:10 hours

More work on Dr. Lowanto's course. I can't wait until it's completed! I kept detailed track of how long a note-set took me to make, and this week, Unit 9 took me five hours. That was pretty good. The work has sped up a bit since I made the graphics modular; I can deconstruct them quickly and rearrange parts. I think modularity may be the way to go on many parts of education. The graphics, like some of the web design templates at work, can be pulled apart and redesigned at will. I got to thinking about my teaching style, learning style and design style. Each works best when parts can be re-used and made newly functional.

Not much else to tell. Dr. Lowanto's stuff is pretty boring. It doesn't take higher-order thinking skills for most of it, and the rest is just figuring out how to combine Microsoft Paint and Photoshop to get graphics to look right. I suppose I'm using the skills from my classes, but perhaps I'm the type of person who is easily bored if I'm not going beyond what I've done before. These handouts aren't exactly engaging.

9/14-9/18 Hours 25:14 Subtotal 58:24 hours

Well, I've now completed all of the handouts I've received so far. There are only a couple left, and I can't be done with them soon enough. This week was all about editing videos. I have previously mentioned the process of video editing, so I won't go into that. Part of the expectation from this particular instructor is that the recording is nearly perfect. This means that I had to listen to every word and noise, minimizing clicks, spaces and other aberrations. Tedious, but I can usually multi-task while listening. There isn't much I can do about the video; that's in the hands of the instructor, but the audio I

get to manipulate. It's easy enough, and takes only minimal finessing. The trick is patience (as usual) and adequate use of the "undo" button. A thirty-minute tape usually takes me an hour to edit, plus another bit of time for the video to render. It's a big user of time. Sometimes I'll try working on projects, but if the instructor wants a near-perfect video, I can't pick a project that's also focus-intensive. I need to be able to drop everything at a split-second to cut a split-second of noise out of the video. Because the timeline needs to be zoomed in to a high magnification, even a moment's delay can cause the screen to jump, and it's much more difficult to edit. That limits the alternate tasks I can do while editing.

The video room is like a hyper-cubicle, a quarantined area isolated so the sound of video cannot infect the other workspaces. I usually edit with headphone on and the door open because of that. It makes me feel less like a hermit while I spend hours in there. Just more COMD (communication disorder) videos. Same ol' same ol'. The videos themselves aren't terribly interesting, but they're not bad.

9/21-9/25 Hours 22:19 Subtotal 80:43 hours

I had a slightly different experience this week. In one of my classes, I met a professor who was interested in what we do at the FACT office. He works in the Family Science department, and was interested in making his class better. He was tired of the constant lecture-test cycle of class that had developed. He was telling me that there needed to be more interaction, so I started interviewing him about his teaching style, subject material, and desires for his class. In the middle of this, I realized I was doing a "SME-Pre" interview. This stands for Subject Matter Expert-Preliminary interview. At the FACT center, this is what is done for all faculty members who want us to work extensively on their courses, and are looking for new ideas. While I didn't have any checklists or forms with me, the concept of the preliminary interview is simple; find out what the instructor is willing to do and his or her preferences.

So, I was able to play full-time Instructional Designer with this professor. I found that what he most wanted was more student involvement. He found the comments in class were limited, and many of the same people responded. He was interested in having those people with limited involvement become more fully invested in the course.

From there we moved on to his class structure and subject matter. His desire for more interaction and his topic of family science naturally led to the idea of groups in class. While discussing families, what could be more natural than family-sized groups where students could interact? The professor was excited about this idea, and immediately we could both see application for the small-group dynamic within his course. By dividing the students, they could discuss important issues together which would allow the instructor to meet separately with different groups and connect more personally. This would solve some of the angst the instructor has with the course. We also discussed other changes and possibilities we could see for the course.

We agreed to meet again next week, and discuss more possibilities. I've been really excited about working with this professor because it gives me more opportunity to create. I finally feel like I'm really doing Instructional Design work instead of being a lackey for other designers. Most of all, I have

missed working with other people. I mean, in the FACT office we collaborate, but it's not quite the same as helping someone. I need to help people. Working with this professor has reminded me of that. If I am not directly helping individuals, I start to feel disconnected, and that the work is somehow not as meaningful. This is good for me to recognize in myself. This will aid with job satisfaction in the future.

9/29-10/2 Hours 19:19 Subtotal 100:02 hours

I was able to get back with the professor again. He is excited about changing his course. He has thought through what he wants to do this semester, and those things he would like to do in the future, but cannot do mid-stream. He sees the possibility of loosely-formed groups now, and more interaction, but a complete course restructure would be out of the question. We looked at upcoming units in more detail. Most of them deal with specific family dynamics. There were questions on raising young children, teens, and helping the transition to adulthood. There were also questions about how to deal with specific issues and problems that commonly arise in families.

The instructor and I were able to come up with specific questions that could be addressed within small groups. We looked at his materials and determined which questions all students should be looking at, and which questions would best be addressed by one group, and then the results shared with the other groups. This led us to a plan for instruction. I was able to help phrase questions in ways that would spark deeper discussions, and in some cases we had groups role-play scenarios with some participants playing the roles of children and others as parents. The instructor seemed thrilled with the idea of students doing much more than taking notes, and this freed him up to monitor the class a bit better. He was starting to see possibilities for a class which had been entirely traditional. He was starting to come up with more ideas for himself, such as how to do a wider variety of assignments within the small-group setting. This was great to see, and I could tell that our time together has really made a difference. He had already planned his first group assignment.

Otherwise, this week has had many of the same elements as previous weeks. I have a lot of small tasks to do. I enjoy the work, but it's fairly repetitive. Upload this, edit that, proof-edit a course, add in some content. Redesigns are more intensive, and therefore more fun, but I don't get those as often. The full-time designers are the go-to people. I believe this is right, especially when they have more personal responsibility for the course, but it seems like they have more fun.
