TEACHING TIPS WITH TECHNOLOGY

Using SoftChalk to Build Tutorials, Lessons, and Assessment Activities

By Jenny Hatleberg, User Instruction & Distance Education Librarian, Takoma Park/Silver Spring

An instructor might want to create a customized online activity for students, but not have the technical skills to create interactive web pages.

SoftChalk can be used to solve that problem!

With SoftChalk, faculty can create content to:

- address different learning needs
- publish within Blackboard or SoftChalk Connect (with paid subscription)
- create open educational resources
- connect with mobile learners

SoftChalk offers tools to create content, quizzes, crossword puzzles, and keyword searches, and enables you to insert videos, polls, and other interactive materials to make lessons more dynamic.

The User Instruction librarians have started using SoftChalk to make online tutorials more interactive, and to build in-class activities that are being used to assess students' information literacy skills. Other librarians are also beginning to use SoftChalk to share information with faculty.

For an example of an in-class activity, visit the Libraries' Keyword Searching quiz, used with Gateway to College and some EN102 students who have received library instruction. (Enter any text to log in.)

Edit in SoftChalk:

To create a SoftChalk activity, you will need to access the software through the VCL. (For an account, contact John Savage at john.savage@montgomerycollege.edu. Then, log in to the VCL system and reserve SoftChalk software for up to four hours at a time.) You can edit text and choose from a menu to insert multiple choice questions, sorting exercises, labeling

activities, and more. You can edit your questions and answers, assign points, limit the number of times students can attempt the activity, and so on.

 Publish activities online:

SoftChalk activities can be published online to an external website, called SoftChalk Connect (http://www.softchalkconnect.com/), and then accessed by a link or embedded in a web page:

Published activities are available to anyone through SoftChalk Connect's learning object repository, with or without an account. However, you will need an account to publish your own lessons to SoftChalk Connect. Free accounts are available, and should be sufficient for faculty members using Blackboard. SoftChalk activities can be added directly to the Blackboard course site, and quiz results can be collected in the Blackboard Gradebook.

Faculty members without a Blackboard course will not be able to collect student scores unless they have paid for a SoftChalk Connect Plus account. This account provides access to additional features, like the SoftChalk Score Center and the ability to share lessons with other SoftChalk Connect users.

There are some technical requirements to be aware of when assigning SoftChalk activities: Students will need to have installed Internet Explorer 8 or higher, or Mozilla Firefox. In addition, their computers must have up-to-date Flash software and plugins.

For more information, visit (http://www.softchalk.com)

Contact your campus User Instruction Librarian for more information about how we have been using SoftChalk!

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If you are interested in sharing your favorite technology teaching tips to promote learning, please submit your article to Gloria Barron, at gloria.barron@montgomerycollege.edu