

Digital Learning Tools – Advantages and Disadvantages

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India is a land of rich culture and heritage. Since the beginning of our civilization, music, dance and drama have been an integral aspect of our culture. Initially, these art forms were used as medium of propagation for religion and social reforms in which music and dance were incorporated to gain popularity. From the Vedic era to the medieval period, the performing arts remained an important source of educating the masses. Even the pitch and the accent of singing different hymns have been prescribed in Vedas. Presently, these art forms have become means of entertainment for people all over the world.

The performing arts is the art form which uses the artist's own bodily gestures, facial expressions, and presence as a medium to create some physical art object. The performing arts encompass live events such as theatre, dance, music, opera, musical theatre, pantomime, puppetry, circus, and fairs, as well as events that imply recording such as film and broadcast. Live and recorded elements may be present in the same event, as in multimedia and digital performance. The Natya Shastra written during the 2nd century has laid the structure of music, dance and drama. Love, humor, pathos, anger, heroism, tenor, disgust, wonder and serenity are the nava rasas or nine basic emotions which are fundamental to all Indian aesthetics. Art reflects human emotions and human beings spontaneously express their frame of mind through various art forms. Thus the intellectual mind merges with the artistic streak, giving birth to art.

There are many technological applications for performing arts. Many teachers use new media tools such as synthesizers, digital cameras, software, virtual field trips, podcasts, videos, and Web sites in addition to traditional instructional tools. Students gain skills in the use of these tools as they acquire knowledge from dance, music, theatre, and visual arts courses. Performing Artists have been involved with computers since the first computers were developed. In the early days, computers required a great deal of space and educators needed strong skills in computers and computer programming. Consequently, applications were limited to large computer systems at universities and corporations. The development of the Personal Computer and the extension of its power, speed, and memory has made it possible for performing artists and educators to use the computer to assist them in their tasks with a minimal amount of experience and computer knowledge. The computer has now become a communication tool offering a Dumber of additional alternatives to using the computer as an adjunct to learning skills and concepts in the performing arts. There is a wealth of information on the World Wide Web and e-mail provides

a means for teachers to be in touch with students and parents, and vice versa. Because of the emergence of the computer as a multi-media environment (text, images, videos, and sound), performing arts educators benefit tremendously from the new technologies. We have barely scratched the surface of the possibilities.

Computer technology can assist us, but it is not a substitute for the imagination. Our imagination is what drives technology. In addition, by teaching the students how to use the resources of the internet for their own research and inquiry, we open a burgeoning world of materials as text, sound, image, and video. Thus the student's reach for materials includes but extends beyond text. Also the student must become aware of how best to use media to communicate the results of their efforts. Students can now create projects which have them composing and producing their own CD of original music or sound scores. Themes can be developed such as using music to make people aware of environmental, human rights, or other social issues. This might be music for a dance, music for a play, music for a film, or concert music. Using computers in the arts, especially music, unleashes the imagination and serves to motivate students to master skills that is often much more powerful than learning the computer as a word processor. We can critique each other's work. We can use the technology to collaborate with other artists. These collaborations can be at considerable distance or from class to class or within the city, or within countries or all of these possibilities. The computer provides the capability of erasing the boundaries of any artists.

The following examples demonstrate some of the potential benefits of working with digital technology:

- Increasing public access to the performing arts
- Increasing paying audiences at live performances and online marketing
- Enhancing educational uses of digital, performing arts content
- Experimenting with the art form
- Using more efficient business practices

Many dance companies, associations, institutes and various dance groups see digital tools as a way to increase public access to Main Stage performances and to ensure geographic, cultural and socio-economic expansion of their audience base. For example on their website they use promotional mini documentaries as a tool for staying relevant to current audiences and connecting with new audiences. One of the issues many artists found is negotiating rights for works that are still in copyright in the recorded performances and clearing artists' and creatives' rights as a major component in creating broadcasts. Retaining copyrights in order to guarantee artistic quality and alleviate performers' concerns with broadcast partners is one of the objectives of many arts associations and groups. One of the major disadvantages of using a digital tool in performing arts like dance is people take videos available on website for granted. They just copy, imitate or learn and consider themselves as professionals. This is the biggest drawback

when the video of any artist or group is just put on the website. Instead of just enjoying and may be learning to improvise many people imitate for professional performances. Digital experiences water down the artistic quality or experience of the work of any artist.

Documenting the Performing Arts

In olden days, art was not bought or sold, they were not in galleries. The work could be taken directly to the public eliminating the middle man of the art world. Because Performance works could never be done twice, the work required documentation. In a business environment, typically each individual may have a separate and distinct method of accomplishing any given task (though not always correct). However, when processes, procedures, or methods are thoroughly and accurately documented, each step necessary to complete a task is detailed and documented for the user, so that the task can be completed in the same manner each time. There are a lot of materials that are linked to performances and productions. Some arise from the work necessary to put the production together such as scripts, sketches and contracts, just to make a few examples. Other materials originate as a way of documenting a performance or production: examples are photographs, videos, interviews with artists and audience members, and more. These materials may be used in the course of a production or in a subsequent re-staging: for example, videos of rehearsals may be used by directors and performers to improve their work; photographs and videos may be used, together with other materials such as sketches and costumes, for re-staging purposes. These materials may have a variety of other uses, including use for publicity and educational purposes. Materials such as critics' reviews are examples of reflections on and reception of performances. Artists, theatres, companies and information professionals, among others, may be involved in commissioning and creating documentation such as photographs and videos. These types of documentation have many limitations and their effectiveness is constantly questioned and discussed in the artistic, scholarly, and information professionals' communities; some artists and theorists reject the idea of fixed-form documentation. But many artists and institutions document their work for many reasons such as their own immediate use, future reference, publicity, and heritage consideration.

It is essential that one document the process as well as any improvements made to it. Most consultants will document both the "As-Is Process" as well as the "To-Be Process". While many think about it as customary and do it for the same reasons, there are other important reasons to document the process. Documenting helps the organization gain long term primary and secondary benefits.

The following are the primary benefits that any organization seeks to gain by explicitly documenting their processes:

- The first and foremost reason for documenting any process is the fact that it reduces operational ambiguity. The next time there is a confusion regarding who is supposed to do what or what are the best practices following which a task needs to be performed, one can look at the detailer documentation and the dispute can be resolved.

- The documentation also acts as training material to help new resources move up the learning curve faster. The documentation acts as the training manual and covers the syllabus as well as provides notes to educate the resources.
- When process changes are documented in a detailed manner, they are available for analysis as and when required. This helps the team in understanding the knowledge that was used in designing the best practices that are currently followed. This also helps the head to decide whether the best practises followed are indeed relevant in the environment they are operating .
- With detailed documentation in place, process improvements can be tracked version to version. This means that the team performing will have the previous 3 to 4 processes and their performance along with the current process and performance.
- One or more of these tools may be virtually essential if a documentation project is to reach the caliber of "best practice." Without using at least one of them, it would be impossible to assemble, reconstruct, or imagine the movement-the very foundation of dance.

Advantages: An approved complete notation score gives full movement descriptions and positions for all dancers, as compared to a camera recording where angles or distance may unintentionally obscure parts of the dance. Notation is most suitable for a long-term record of the original style and the details of production.

Disadvantages: The lengthy time to notate a dance fully as well as the need to have the dancers available for the notator can make for a cumbersome and expensive process at times. The use of notation for reconstruction is restricted by both a general lack of access to people qualified to reconstruct from specific notation systems and the length of time it takes to reconstruct from a score. Reconstruction from videotape is considered more efficient because copies of the tape can be lent to dancers to shorten the.

The purpose of most performance art documentation is to make the artist's work available to a larger audience, not to capture the performance as an "interactional accomplishment" to which a specific audience and a specific set of performers coming together in specific circumstances make equally significant contributions. Some questions which every artist using digital tools should ask themselves

- What is our goal for using technology to reach more people - are we trying to make money, or increase access (or both) ?
- What are some ways we can test run sustainable content creation and distribution?
- What avenues are available to support more trials so that artists are not exposed financially?

- How can we increase the expertise required for companies to embrace and use the digital technology in a balance way for art purpose?

References:

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