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A Taste of New Instructional Technologies Available at the ITS Multimedia Lab

By **Robyn Berland**

With the implementation of OS X on the Apple Macintosh platform in the ITS Multimedia Lab and the ITS hands-on classrooms, new and improved instructional software applications have been added to our software suite. These applications provide tools that have potential for enriching the hands-on computer-based learning experience. NYU faculty are invited to experiment with these tools and to evaluate their effectiveness in supporting their individual teaching styles.

Enhance Your Class with SMARTBoard Technology

The wired classroom in the ITS Multimedia Lab contains an instructor's station with a SMARTBoard Interactive Whiteboard (see Figure 1) at the front of the rectangular room. The 25 student computer workstations line the remaining perimeter of the room. Faculty can manage the classroom in accordance with their individual instructional styles and the requirements of the course materials being presented.

For example, students can be placed at the front of the room (close to the presentation) during a lecture, brought to the center of the room for active discussion, and returned to their computers to apply the current lesson. Of course, students can also remain at their workstations throughout the class. Student presentations can be given at the front of the room on the SMARTBoard or at the individual workstations, kiosk-style.

The rear projection SMARTBoard has features that are helpful in an instructional environment. The touch screen technology frees the instructor from the mouse and to some degree the keyboard, and places the instructor and the presentation within the same line of sight for the students.

As ideas are presented and discussed, annotations can be superimposed on a computer image using electronic ink. The presentation, along with annotations and information from screen captures, can be saved in HTML or PDF format and uploaded to the course's Blackboard shell for student review at a later time. Presentations are preserved using the SMARTBoard Notebook tool. The Notebook can also be used in advance of a lecture to prepare materials for presentation.

Students enjoy using the interactive board, as well. For instance, students using Geometer's Sketchpad in the ITS Multimedia Lab classroom draw and manipulate objects on the board to demonstrate and experiment with concepts.



Figure 1. The SMARTBoard Interactive Whiteboard.

Connect Computers Using Apple Remote Desktop

Another tool available at the Multimedia Lab is the Apple Remote Desktop. Developed by Apple Computer as a lab management tool, this software can be used to manage student workstations during class meetings. Using an easy-to-understand interface (shown in Figures 2 and 3), instructors can share selected computer displays, including their own, with any or all of the student workstations.

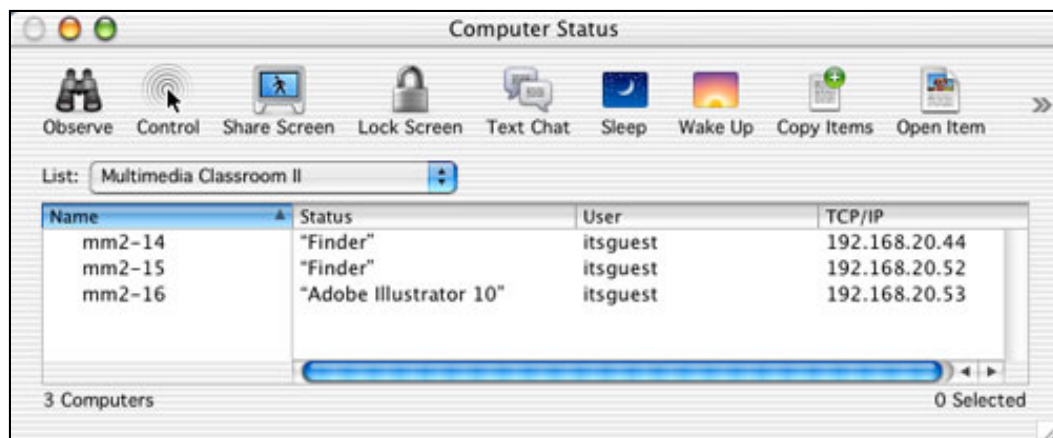


Figure 2. The Apple Remote Desktop control panel.

Student work can be displayed on the SMARTBoard or on each student's computer without the need to transfer files. While students are working at their individual workstations, the instructor can use the Control, Observe, and Text Chat options to guide students through complex assignments. Last, but not least, there is a Lock Screen option that can be used to focus students' attention on the instructor when important information is being communicated.

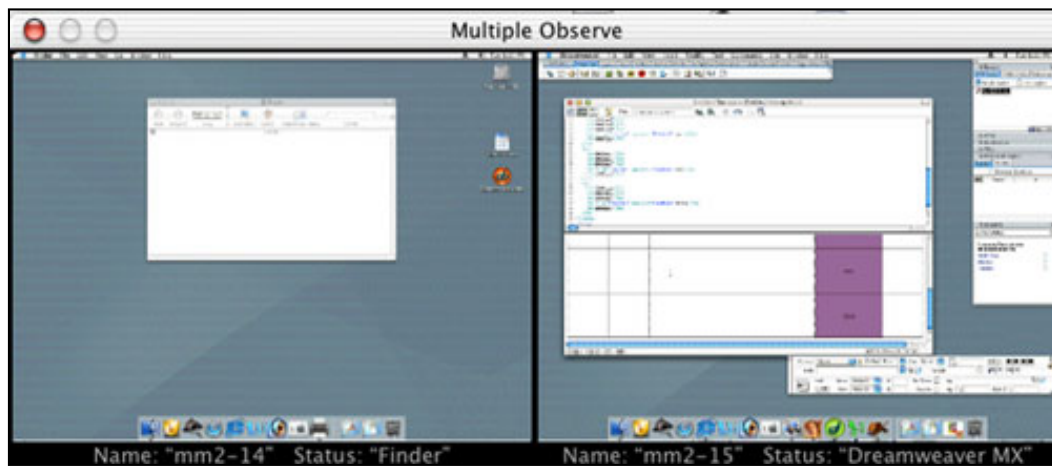


Figure 3. The Apple Remote Desktop in action.

iChatAV—The Next-Generation Instant Messenger

A new technology of note to faculty is iChatAV, an Instant Messaging tool. Available in OS X, iChatAV incorporates audio and video, making it possible for people to see and hear each other while they chat (see Figure 4). We have installed this software to give instructors and students an opportunity to explore the possible applications of this versatile technology in the classroom.

During the O'Reilly Conference on Emerging Technologies which I recently attended, I was amazed to observe the steady, on-topic conversation occurring among attendees during presentations using iChatAV. This tool has great potential for facilitating communication among students in the wired classroom setting and faculty in teacher conferences, and in a variety of other educational scenarios.

Getting Started

NYU faculty interested in using or experimenting with these and other tools available at the ITS Multimedia Lab are invited to visit the Lab at 35 West 4th Street, open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m., and on Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. (closed on Sundays).



Figure 4. A sample iChatAV session.

To schedule a class in an ITS wired classroom, visit <http://www.nyu.edu/its/classrooms/> and complete the online application form. If you have questions about any of the technologies described in this article, please call Robyn Berland at 1-212-998-3396.

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