Introduction

HD Magazine is a cross-disciplinary initiative, seeking to bring together students from the fields of journalism and graphic design, from 1st year through to postgraduate level, in the School of Communications and Arts (SCA) at Edith Cowan University (ECU). Lecturers from the Bachelor of Communications and Bachelor of Creative Industries degrees at ECU sought to collaborate on a project that asked two different groups of students to express the same story or concept from different angles: one written and one visual. This paper details: firstly, the logistics of running the magazine as an assessable project for students across two disciplines; secondly, the research behind the graphic design aspects of the project (which, through its focus on drawn, rather than photographed images, is unorthodox); thirdly, the benefits gained from each new edition of the magazine, including increased production responsibilities for the students; and finally, how the project meets university criteria of teaching from research, engagement with communities and industry, and assessment feeding back into research as part of an on-going research cycle.

Logistics

After sharing discussion about assignment topics, staff from the Journalism and Graphic Design majors realised that two of their assignments could be aligned in terms of the logistics of timetabling classes and assessment points. Each group needed the disciplinary skills of the other to form a completely student-generated result rather than accessing external material through which students would complete their assignments. Because of the focus on drawing in the graphic design unit, the graphics assignment required students to illustrate a chosen theme by thinking carefully about the advantages of drawing pictures rather than taking or using photographs. In particular, focusing on the communicative potential of iterative and exaggerative reduction of pictorial realism and composing a picture within a magazine spread. Meanwhile the journalism assignment required students to communicate to an audience about a chosen theme. Students had to learn how to access information using practical journalistic skills such as research and interviews, and to report the story effectively through a publication. Both discipline areas wanted to strengthen student group skills as well as encourage students to share knowledge and communication skills, showcase their work and contribute to establishing a sense of community within the school.

The resulting HD Magazine is a bi-annually published, 38 to 40 page, full colour magazine, run as a commercial enterprise sold at five dollars a copy, returning money to the university. Three issues – *Business*, *Pacific Politics* and *Science* – have been published to date.

This collaborative, cross-disciplinary project has facilitated an assessable, authentic workplace experience across the SCA, in line with ECU graduate attribute policies and curriculum framework. It has also allowed an examination of the dynamics of cross-disciplinary teams working on multimodal output. The process of researching, writing and compiling the articles into a magazine provides insight into how publications grow from early ideas to printed pages; from thought, through virtual presence, to physical artefact. This experiment is being looked at by the SCA Head of School and Creative Industries Program Director as a successful case study stemming from applied research into students' professional disciplines. It is also being considered as a positive initiative for first year engagement as it involves 1st to 4th year students from across study areas.

The HD Magazine initiative has attracted an SCA grant (2010) and a Faculty Teaching and Learning grant (2012) as well as advertising revenue from ECU Public Relations, the Graduate Research School, Curriculum 2012 and Beyond Project and assorted local businesses.

For the past two years, each semester around 40 graphic design students were presented with a project brief titled Illustration and Typography Composition. The brief explained that design students would be allocated a journalism student as the writer responsible for a 1600-word article, while the design students themselves would be responsible for the illustration and layout the article. Each semester the overall topic was different. To complete the project the graphic design student needed to contact the journalism student to further discuss the project requirements. This phase formed the content for HD Magazine.

During compilation phase the project continued interdisciplinary, collaborative, authentic learning. Working on HD Magazine is teaching students industry relevant skills through real world tasks. While the lecturers guide the process, all of the selection, writing, sub-editing, design and compilation work is done by students. The

collaboration has produced three editions so far with each edition made by a fresh, core team of students. Observing which aspects of the production students struggle with is showing the lecturing staff which specific details need to be explicitly taught and which competencies evolve naturally out of the existing course materials. This is resulting in an overall strengthening of the journalism and graphic design programs.

Visual Research and Design Brief

On the design side of the project, the brief instructed students that that they were to illustrate a visual pertinent to the text provided and compose the picture within an editorial spread for a publication. Consideration had to be given to elements such as typography, composition, point of view, colour, texture and line. Importantly students needed to decide which visual reduction techniques to apply in the article's illustration and how this influenced the communicative affect. These techniques were described in the brief as being executed via the following means:

> A) The realism continuum. How realistic will your subject(s) look? Would it make more sense for them to be photographically precise or stick-figure simple, or somewhere in between?
>
> B) Relative to a norm. What is the perceived norm for your subject? Would it communicate the way you want it to if it were more exaggerated beyond the norm (caricature) or pulled back towards a norm (anti-caricature)?

Design students are encouraged to consider theories of graphic distillation, iterative reduction and exaggerative reduction, during the conceptual development process as part of the reasoning, and justification behind their project (Dwyer, 1972; Gropper, 1963; Knowlton, 1966; McCloud, 1993). An understanding of the theory and techniques of caricature and of iterative reduction, contributes to the student's skill set for future application of visual communication solutions beyond the typical design training in typography. Having to articulate their thinking on each project, as it pertains to the theory will, when students graduate to become professional designers strengthen their communication with clients. The project brief prompts the student into considering the intended message to be delivered to the viewer by this editorial illustration; which of the image's details should be exaggerated (caricaturized) in order to highlight or evoke this intended message; or how the image should be reduced to be more typical of the class of objects portrayed.

During content creation, students were required to provide a written rationale explaining their thoughts on the illustration approach or combination of the techniques they have chosen. If technique A: why they chose that level of realism, and whether thinking about how realistic the image should be was helpful in the construction of the illustration and why, including source images and a sketch of a realism continuum with the position of student's drawing marked on a line between the source image and a pictograph of the subject. If using technique B: why caricature was used or why they chose to illustrate using a realistic, cartoony or pictographic style, including source image(s) plus a drawing of a norm for that subject. During the compilation phase, the HD team also provided a written rationale explaining their thoughts on the decisions made relating to the overall composition, colour, typography and the balance between the variety and consistency within the edition. They also needed to examine how magazines divide up different sections, process work, project management and workflow as well as answer the overall question: why does it look the way it does?

This commentary and reflective approach allows students to practice the articulation of the design process and visual decision making. This highlights the key questions of why and when, and moves students beyond concentrating on technical software training and operations.

A reflective approach and action-research cycle (Crouch, 2012; Swann, 2002) was applied during the creation of content and compilation processes for each edition of the magazine. The students (The HD Team) and staff examined the previous editions and design processes in order to improve the creation of articles, illustrated content, project management, construction, quality, selection process and final output. This continual feedback loop resulted in improvements of process and output for each edition. The following describes the evolution of HD to date:

- Collaboration February 2010 – Collaboration between journalism and graphic design arose that saw articles created by journalism students given to design students to illustrate and layout. Several rationales and benefits were identified as being key to the collaboration. Journalism students must get used to strangers reading their work. Design students must get used to

working with briefs of varying quality and clarity. Journalism students receive PDFs of their work illustrated for their portfolios. Design students have real editorial design pieces to show in their portfolios.

- *The Business Edition*, December 2010 – The collaboration continued and was refined towards the production of the first issue of the magazine. Overall the quality of writing and illustrations improved. It was assembled by a volunteer group, The HD Team, comprised of a small group of journalism students and a staff member, and two design staff. As this was the first edition, the compilation phase of selection, writing, sub-editing and design were being trialled. The HD Team documented the processes as possible methods of operation for students to follow to produce the magazine with decreasing staff involvement. Two hundred copies of the first HD Magazine were printed. Copies were sold to SCA for high school promotions, ECU International and to students keen to see HD quality work. Rationale and benefits: enabled hardcopy showcasing of student work, and engaged students in the minutiae of production process not usually taught; brought journalism and graphics staff and students into the same room to collaborate.

- *The Pacific Politics Edition*, June 2011 – We embedded all aspects of production of the magazine into student coursework assessments. The bulk of the content is produced in a wide range of units, the best work was assembled by eight student sub editors and four student finishing artists. Their work was assessed and graded with clear links to unit learning outcomes and university criteria. For example graphics students practiced the following:
    1. discuss the current trends and developments in vector-based design and software;
    2. create a range of industry standard vector-based graphic elements such as symbols and logos;
    3. express information clearly using vector-based information graphics;
    4. demonstrate through written rationales their understanding of current image theory;
    5. create vector-based designs suitable for a range of media; and

6. design and create single-page print and web layouts using vector-based software.

- *The Science Edition*, Sem 2 2011– With two editions now in existence, journalism students were told that if their work was of a high enough standard it would be included. This strategy models journalism professional practice and newsroom competition. The assembly team ranged from 1st through to 4th year students.

To date eight units have been involved with the collaboration: six journalism units and two design units.

HD Magazine and University Criteria

This project is significant as it is the first time a collaborative approach of this type has been embedded across SCA units. It genuinely facilitates an assessable and authentic workplace experience in alignment with ECU Graduate Attribute Policies (GAP), covering the top four GAP outlined below, with the last planned to be more effectively covered in coming editions:

- Ability to communicate – clarity of written and verbal expression, including in public fora, and through appropriate use of technology;
- Ability to work in teams – collaborating and contributing effectively in diverse settings;
- Critical appraisal skills – planning, organising, problem solving and decision making;
- Ability to generate ideas – having the courage and confidence to be creative and innovative; and
- Cross-cultural and international outlook – engaging productively and harmoniously with diverse cultures.

The collaboration also covers key ECU Curriculum 2012 objectives including: Assessment for Learning, English Language Proficiency, First Year Experience, Active and Engaged Learning, Research Informed Teaching and Workplace Integrated Learning.

This experiment allows examination of the dynamics of cross-disciplinary teams working on multimodal output. The process of researching, writing and compiling the articles into a magazine provided insight into how publications grow from early ideas to glossy pages. The project also meets university criteria of teaching from research, engagement with communities and industry, and assessment feeding back into research as part of an on-going, action research cycle. In this regard it ticks all the boxes at university: its written content is generated through journalism students engaging with communities outside of university, and the final printed artefacts are a result of design students engaging with their print industry. The unit for the design side of the project is taught through content derived in visual research. We are now on the fourth edition of HD Magazine. Its improvement from the first, via each edition, is evidence of the quality feedback loop through which every aspect of the magazine's production is fed. Whereas the research informed the teaching that produced the original magazine, now the product of the teaching and the things we have learned as students and staff working together has informed the research.

The Future

We are seeking to continue and expand the project in 2012 to involve more students and enable the creation of online content. This is crucial because as iPad/touchscreen media delivery is becoming mainstream, it is essential our graduates are able to produce appropriate interactive content. As we look to future editions, we are using what we have learned to teach more skills to more students. One avenue of exploration is to add 'flick-zines' in addition to the hardcopy print version on HD. Flick-zines are made for ease of reading on mobile devices, and will be made using template software such as Issuu. This will enable all student work to be put into flick-zines, and for the content we deliver to the HD Magazine production crews at the end of each semester to be shared with entire classes over the course of each semester.

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