

A Self-Instructional Guide to the Development and Use of Video in Distance Learning Programmes

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The *Self-Instructional Guide to the Development and Use of Video in Distance Learning Programmes* consists of a workbook and videotape designed for use by technically competent subject matter experts who are new to the preparation of distance learning materials. The purpose of the guide is to illustrate how the instructional design principles of *integration* and *activation* can improve the instructional efficiency and effectiveness of distance learning materials, especially in practical and applied areas of study. The author suggests that upon completing this guide content experts will be able to make a reasonable start at developing instructional videos for their distance learning projects.

While the latter goal is not fully realized (and doubtless could not be achieved in a self-study module of this scope and duration), the author does introduce inexperienced course writers to some useful instructional design considerations for multi-media distance learning materials. Guidelines are also provided to help writers decide whether or not to incorporate video materials into an instructional package.

The guide describes and models an approach to *integration*: the interrelationship of various media (print, video, audio, physical models, and so on) to increase the efficiency of instruction. The most appropriate media for a particular learning task are selected and then incorporated into a coherent, integrated instructional package to introduce, present, reiterate, and reinforce the information and/or skills to be learned. Implicit in this approach is the concept that when developers go to the trouble of producing an instructional resource such as a video segment, they should ensure that it is not used simply as an optional or supplementary component that the learner can safely ignore.

Media selection criteria (especially for video), appropriate use of the media, and effective routing of the learner among media resources are key

factors in media integration strategies. In making media selection decisions, the developer must ensure that the medium is appropriate for the learning activity, that the learner can access the technologies needed to use the medium, and that the learner will be able to recognize and extract the relevant information from the resource.

In preparing this guide, the author has generally adhered to the media integration principles he has presented, although the utility and effectiveness of at least one of the four video segments is questionable.

The guide also attempts to model the process of *activation*: requiring the learner to engage in a number of different intellectual and physical activities before, during, and after the actual presentation of the material to be learned. To create a focus for study, advance organizers in assorted varieties and formats (including statements, leading questions, and pre-tests) and essential background information are presented at the beginning of each sub-unit. The learner is then routed to appropriate learning resources and activities, including going back to a particular resource more than once to highlight different aspects of the information presented. Finally, questions and exercises are presented, allowing learners to apply the newly acquired skills and/or information to their own situations.

Several different examples of learner activation and media integration patterns are illustrated within the module. Each sub-unit routes the student through the learning activities and resources in a different way. Obviously, the author has sought to avoid using a standard design "formula" for the sub-units, and the various patterns serve as practical models for the novice course designer.

In general, the *Self-Instructional Guide* offers the content specialist new to course material development a reasonably good model to follow and a practical, albeit simplified, introduction to some key issues in the design of multimedia instructional resources for distance learning. Most of the video segments used in the unit are necessary and serve their stated purposes reasonably well; the structures and devices that route the learner between print and video resources are satisfactory; and the activities that the learner is directed to undertake help to reinforce the learning objectives of the guide.

Those interested in acquiring and using the *Self-Instructional Guide* should ensure that they specify the correct video format and technical standard in their order. The reviewer was fortunate to have access to a video cassette player that could play videotape produced under the PAL technical standard

used in Australia. However, PAL players are not readily available in North America, and conversion from PAL to NTSC, North America's technical standard, can be expensive and inconvenient.

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