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Tapping into History Via Video: Enlisting the Legends and Legacies of Our Field

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There are many twists, turns, and unexpected challenges in life. Teaching an introductory course at Indiana University (IU) called “R511 Instructional Technology Foundations” three years ago for the first time was one such challenge. Trained in other fields—namely, accounting and educational psychology—I was admittedly quite nervous. Would students in the course quickly discover that I was not an expert on many of the featured topics?

What to do? Naturally, the first solution was to ask others who had recently taught R511 for their course syllabi. Second, I learned that there was a boatload of seminal articles in a book by Bob Reiser and Rick Dempsey (Reiser & Dempsey, 2012, 2018) which other R511 instructors had relied upon in the past. Third, there were several thoughtfully designed learner-centered class activities and tasks piloted by previous R511 instructors that I could readily appropriate, modify, or replace. Fourth, to make the course even more relevant and authentic, I decided to bring in weekly synchronous class guests via Adobe Connect and later Zoom, including prior students and retired course instructors as well as book and article authors. They would discuss their careers in the field, often in line with the weekly topic, and captivate my students with their personal stories, life-changing decisions, and sage advice.

But, as someone trained as an accountant, I wanted more. More is always more to an accountant. In addition to finding online cases, instruments, simulations, and instructional design visualizations, I soon remembered that I had accumulated a highly valuable stockpile of expert videos in another course that I taught on learning theories (i.e., P540). Several of the key videos from the P540 course were from a website called the AECT Legends and Legacies Project that was coordinated by Barbara Lockee at Virginia Tech (Lockee & Song, 2016; Lockee, Song, & Li, 2014). As I once again explored that website, it dawned on me that perhaps the videos found there could be another way for my students to learn the R511 content.

The dozens of available AECT Legends and Legacies videos was a veritable goldmine. Robert Heinich? Check. Walt Wittich? Check. Former IU professor, Ivor Davies. Check. My high energy colleague Tom Reeves from The University of Georgia. Double check. Interviews with Michael Spector, Rita Richey, Richard Clark, Sharon Smaldino, Mary Herring, David Jonassen, Marcy Driscoll, David Merrill, and dozens of others could be found there. This is a truly remarkable collection of the thought leaders of the field. Nothing else currently approximates it. Importantly, as detailed below, these “history maker” project videos can be used in many ways.

So how to use them? Back in 2011, I wrote an article on ten ways to use shared online video from an instructor perspective and ten more ways from a learner point of view (Bonk, 2011). For instance, such videos can be utilized as a conceptual anchor or macrocontext that can be replayed to look for key concepts and principles of the course (see The Cognition and Technology Group

at Vanderbilt, 1993). One can also play a segment of a video interview and ask students to list key principles of a particular instructional approach or learning theory. Playing such videos might also inspire learners to contact the person being interviewed with their own set of questions. In addition, from a pragmatic standpoint, students would then know what each of these leaders in the field looked and sounded like as well as gain insights into their thought processes. Third, students might be asked to mine the database of Legends and Legacies videos for key segments to play in class and concepts to show. Given that it is difficult to show an entire interview during a particular class, students might use free tools like TubeChop to segment the videos into small pieces. Students might also extend the interview sequence with questions sent via email to the one or more people spotlighted in these videos.

How else have I used them? Well, I supplemented the R511 course readings with many of these AECT Legends and Legacies interviews. For instance, Week 2 of R511 is an overview week on instructional technology (e.g., see Reiser, 2012). It included a key article on the theoretical foundations of the field from Michael Spector (Spector, 2008) which was supplemented by an eye opening 40-minute interview of Dr. Spector conducted by Barbara Lockee. This video interview takes the viewer on a highly unique and intriguing journey of Dr. Spector's career in the field. In my face-to-face section of R511, pieces of this interview were played in class and discussed.

As another example, Week 4 on the "Instructional Development Process" was enhanced by using a video interview of Charlie Reigeluth as well as an AECT interview of David Merrill conducted by Gary Morrison. Also embedded in that week is an AECT tribute video to Robert Gagne with stories and accolades from an assortment of Gagne's former colleagues and students. Week 6 on Cognitive and Constructivist Perspectives was supplemented with insightful interviews with David Jonassen and Richard Mayer. Fortunately, during the course, I also tapped into additional video interview footage of all five of these famous scholars—Reigeluth, Merrill, Gagne, Jonassen, and Mayer. And, given that I had personally met all these people, I could pause these videos at any time and add a personal story, when and where appropriate and relevant.

In Week 9 on the History of Instructional Technology (IT), I assigned Bob Reiser's article, "A history of instructional design and technology" from his book on *Trends and issues in instructional design and technology* (Reiser, 2018). His 22-minute AECT video interview was a welcome supplement to that article. Additionally, Dr. Reiser was an online class guest of mine in Adobe Connect one evening. During that session, we discussed many aspects of the history of the field as well as the fourth edition of his trends and issues book (Reiser & Dempsey, 2018) which was in press at the time. The Legends and Legacy videos were a key part of that magical event. Importantly, such enchanting moments will persist as these people will likely be available for students and other interested parties to mine and watch not just in a decade, but perhaps hundreds of years from now.

Week 9 was far from over in terms of the AECT videos. For instance, students were asked to watch part of a critical 53-minute video interview supplement to an article by Dr. Michael Molenda (Molenda, 2008). The video and historical overview article were highly relevant since decades earlier Dr. Molenda had, in fact, created the exact same R511 course that I was now charged with teaching. He also had produced a set of historically and conceptually rich narrated

presentations on key topics in the field for each week of the course. Importantly, Dr. Molenda lived in Bloomington, Indiana so he had been a guest in both the face-to-face and online sections of this class on several occasions. Students could see him, hear him, meet him, greet him, and replay and rewatch him anytime.

There was still more support from the AECT Legends and Legacies videos during Week 9. In a somewhat bold move, I listed 14 videos from the AECT HistoryMakers project (Lockee et al., 2014) for students to select from and watch one or two of them including ones with AECT Executive Director Phil Harris as well as Kay Persichitte, Mendel Sherman, Rita Richey, Mike Hannafin, Mary Herring, Kyle Peck, and five other instructional technology celebrities.

There is a final assignment option in this course wherein students watch and reflect on 15 or more of these video interviews and write a reflection paper on the insights, concerns, commonalities, disagreements, suggestions, trends, experiences, projects, and technologies mentioned by these thought leaders. This assignment also asked students to reflect on some of the issues raised in these videos that the field of instructional and educational technology needed to address today as well as what the future might hold according to these experts.

Clearly, there are countless ways to use these video interviews from AECT. They offer a unique knowledge portal to an assembly of the most adventurous pioneers in the field. As such, they can help one build a new course or enhance an existing one. They certainly have been a confidence builder for me. At the same time, they form a lasting opportunity for the thought leaders in educational and instructional technology to apprentice newcomers into the field. From a macro perspective, the 50 plus videos in this website serve as an historical roadmap of the progress that has been made in the discipline as seen firsthand by people with decades of experience working in the trenches of it. And if you look and listen hard and long enough, you will discover that this knowledge portal also contains a wellspring of ideas for future research in the field. Need to design a dissertation study? No problem. Just get some popcorn, watch a few of these videos from the giants of the field, and use your imagination.

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Resources

AECT Legends and Legacies videos: <http://aectlegends.org/>

R511 Syllabus: http://curtbonk.com/P511_online_syllabus_fall_2017.htm