

Case Study: Web based courseware on digital video production

Partner 24: University of Stavanger

Summary

The objectives of the case has been to develop and test a high end interactive, on line learning application by utilizing specific features of the broadband technology and at the same time demonstrate how members of the local communities may use digital video on the web, to express meaningful messages.

The application is available to the members of the Baltic Rural Broadband Project, which may utilize the application in their local communities to train the public in how to make use digital video as a communication tool on the internet. The application will also be a permanent learning resource to the developer, the University of Stavanger, which will use the application in a variety of courses, both on campus and on the internet.

The application has created a basis for a new development methodology of online learning applications at the University of Stavanger.

Background

A former version of the online course application was developed in the EU-project, Xenoclipse (http://www.xenoclipse.net/the_project.php). The aim for the Xenoclipse project was to train immigrant youths throughout Europe to express themselves by video and to get their video messages on the internet. The intention was both to make them able to be visible in media and to demonstrate other means of expression than for instance public disturbance, which at that time was widespread in particular in France.

Several of the partners of the Xenoclipse project were media faculties at universities throughout Europe. Traditionally they have taught media courses in workshops and in regular campus classes. The University of Stavanger (UiS) however, has a professional development unit for online learning applications, NettOp, and suggested to develop the core of the course as a complete and stand-alone online application. According to the idea of the Xenoclipse project, this would make the course more versatile, less dependent of media professionals and equipment of the facilitator of the course, thus easier to deploy at schools, youth clubs, immigrant organizations etc in the local communities.

There are no prerequisites to the course other than access to a video camera, editing software, which in most cases are standard on any new PC, and of course access to the internet. The courseware is however highly interactive, containing numerous of video examples, and for all practical purposes it demands a broadband access. However, video upload to the internet also requires similar access. Thus the courseware is a perfect example both on how to utilize broadband technology in the design of advanced courseware, to obtain specific social goals in the local communities and to make the public able to utilize the broadband access to their own benefit.

The initial version of the courseware was translated to a number of languages: English, German, Flemish, Spanish, Catalan, Basque, French and Norwegian. The responses from the users in the Xenoclipse project were generally good. Still, due to the constraints of the project the tests were limited. The BRB project however provided a framework for further tests of the courseware among the BRB partners, both in formal courses and as an informal offer on the internet. Based on the experience, the development unit, NettOp, and media faculty at UiS continued the development of the courseware.

The latest version of the home stretch application exists only in Norwegian and has already been used by UiS in several of the university's media courses. This version has also been offered to the Scandinavian partners of the BRB project, which will be able to make use of the application still in Norwegian. By the end of the BRB project the courseware will also be available in English, and offered to all BRB partners as a broadband content resource for future use by their network subscribers.

Technically, the application is designed as a content object, making the courseware independent of the server of the designer. It may be downloaded to and run from local media servers of the BRB partners, making the organization of courses locally more sustainable and independent of the developer of the application.

How decisions are taken?

The initiative to develop the courseware came from the development unit, NettOp, at UiS. NettOp is a central unit at UiS, organized underneath the Director of the university, supporting the faculties and administrative staff in projects and with tasks concerning network technology and applications for learning. NettOp's engagement is prioritized by strategic needs of the university and the unit's capacity. Engagement in EU projects fulfils both requirements of the Norwegian Department of Research and Education to the university, and is a means in this case to increase the university's repository of online learning applications. The need for NettOp's assistance was initially requested by faculty at the Department of Media, Culture and Society, which both initially participated in the Xenoclipse project and currently in the BRB project. The synergy between the two projects was the reason for NettOp's decision to get involved and invest time and resources in further development of the courseware.

The courseware was initially suggested as a solution to needs in the EU project, Xenoclipse, which ended in 2006. In the BRB project there was a need to demonstrate advanced courseware that could have an impact on local communities. The courseware was extended and adjusted to meet potential needs the partners of the BRB project would have to train individuals, local businesses, teachers etc. in how to exploit a broadband access to communicate meaningful messages by video.

The courseware is designed to be in principal self sustained and does not require much organization or resources to be of value to the users. To UiS, the courseware is a permanent resource expanding the university's capability to offer media courses both on and off campus. In particular in courses offered regionally, the courseware is of great value and has in fact given a new offer formerly not available by UiS.

Model of financing

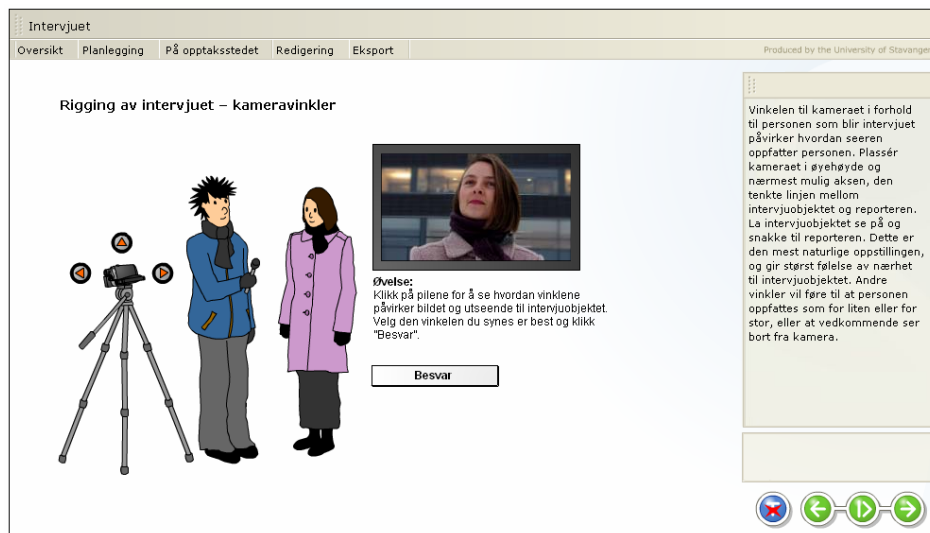
The development of the courseware is mainly financed by UiS, through NettOp, but could not be realised without the co financing of the EU projects. The co financing of the BRB project is 30%.

Work process (implementation)

The need for a courseware tool was identified both in the Xenoclipse and the BRB projects. The pedagogical design, content and technical solution was developed by NettOp. The faculty of the media department at UiS participated in the development as subject matter experts. The initial version was tested in the Xenoclipse project. Further development and the organisation of formal course took place within the framework of the BRB project.

Recommendations

Development of online courseware requires special knowledge and skills across several disciplines. It is advisable to engage expert development teams to be able to develop such applications successfully.



The screenshot illustrates the layout and methodology of the online course.