

‘Just ask Jimmy’ Answers the Question, “What is Vimeo?”

A healthy skeptic of most tech solutions — I favor viewing ‘the forest for the trees,’ before deciding what’s best for any given learning environment or individual, recommending everyone test-drive before they buy. As a bit of background, I’m an IT Specialist, an Artist whose been teaching in tech-heavy multifaceted studio classrooms for over twenty-five years. Admittedly, I favor learner-centric pedagogies over the teacher-centric [A topic for another day.]. Being so, when it comes to technical resources I’m all in favor of adaptable design over one-size-templates. I’ve seen fads and fancies, follies and foibles come-’n’-go, but what ultimately holds true is; with each added step, bit of new software, button click or feature — both students and teachers are that much further from the deeper work of learning (increased complexity, decreases usability).

Knowing this, I’m not here attempting to add another layer to an already overlaid quagmire of auto-magic solutions. Instead I’m here to speak to experience with the video platform Vimeo, as an alternative to the untethered wild-west of other media platforms. A favorite of professional Artists, Vimeo is a video publishing website with the absence of pre-roll advertising and a lot of the uncivil bombing or trolling that permeates other services. Not just for Artists, Vimeo offers a relatively clean and functional platform for publishing video content [lectures and demos] and embedding content into an online classroom. Additionally videos can be included in collections, groups and channels (password privacy an option); providing specific research libraries for almost any subject.

Shifting to a paperless classroom around ’04 – ’05, and later imbedding live-links to course information sheets, I’ve managed to organize thousands of learning resources through Vimeo. Though unpredictable, this paperless live-linked approach made it easy to step from a brick-’n’-mortar classroom to the virtual during the pandemic-lockdown (pandem-onium :). Students made the leap with relative ease too; setting up Vimeo accounts and joining the online classroom to submit work, or to view demonstrations or examples. Without forcing Vimeo as a requirement, 65% of my students joined voluntarily, while others opted for other modes to remain connected. With 60% of my spring courses unavoidably ‘video reliant’ [3 of 5], I was pleasantly surprised by the number of students who readily adapted to the platform to submit work — and blown away by some of the approaches they brought to the table. Although a number chose not to join [or could not (?)], they were still able to access demonstrations and examples via television or a smart-phone.

Though not a perfect solution (nothing is) — Vimeo, as a resource and delivery platform is certainly worth checking out if looking to utilize audio/visual media for a classroom — brick-’n’-mortar or virtual. Anyone interested in kicking the Vimeo tires, I’m open to approach, inquiry or providing demonstration. You can email me sometime in September when I’m back from my visit to the International Space Station ;•D — email, jdowner@monroecc.edu. with the subject heading, ‘Just ask Jimmy’ about Vimeo.

Lastly, I get it. Tech is never easy. And, tech for tech’s sake is even worse. In an effort to ease some of the fears and stresses of the moment, I’ll extend some sage advice from one of my most influential Professors, Connie Coleman (1947 – 2011). In response to much of the angst around

shifting media trends of the '80s, Connie would openly dismiss the belief technology was a solution, or should be the pivotal center of learning. She would tell us (paraphrasing), “Though new technologies are becoming a necessity, don’t hinge your life on some bit of software, or new fangled box. They will ultimately disappoint you. Software comes-’n’-goes, and it doesn’t care. It’s cold, and empty. Computers solve nothing, — they’re tools, quick to reach obsolescence. Instead, study the larger concepts, the principle constants. They are lasting, and will serve you well throughout life.” This advice has served me well throughout the sea-changes of industry (filmmaking and design), and continues to inform my teaching.

— Jim

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