

Phun with Photostory 3

Mark Geary

PhotoStory 3 is a free software program which offers you and your students a new multimedia method of sharing in the classroom. Photostory offers students and teachers a quick and easy way to create movies with narration and

music. This author describes varied examples of how the instructor uses this presentation tool to appeal to the visual learners as well as basic instructions on how to get started.

Many of today's students are visual learners (Gardner, 1993). Lynnell Burmark (2002) has shown that by using illustrated materials, retention and recall increase 42 % and the information transfers to long term memory at a whopping 89%. Marzano (2005) uses the term "non-linguistic representations" to describe one of his nine core effective instructional strategies. Non-linguistic representations include creating graphic representations, drawing pictures or pictographs and generating mental images or pictures.

Photos are a great tool for teaching in the classroom, but with moving pictures, narration and music, they are even better! David Jakes (2007) discusses the impact of YouTube and the ability to share videos as an aid to teaching. Research supporting the use of video in the educational process has a long and significant history. As early as 1942, research showing the effectiveness of video training films was being established (Olsen & Bass, 1987). Further research, both historical and contemporary, suggests that technology-based instruction can and does result in learning. Some of the more interesting findings found in the following television, multimedia, and computer tech-

nologies delivering content to support learning:

- Watching the television program *Blue's Clues* has strong effects on developing preschool viewers' flexible thinking, problem solving, and prosocial behaviors (Bryant, Mullikin, McCollum, Ralastin, Raney, Miron, et al., 1998).
- Court TV's *Choices and Consequences* program reduced middle school students' verbal aggression— including tendencies to tease, swear at, and argue with others (Wilson, Linz, Federman, Smith, Paul, Nathanson, et al., 1999).
- Viewing *Sesame Street* was positively associated with subsequent performance in reading, mathematics, vocabulary, and school readiness (Wright, Huston, and Kotler, 2001).
- A "recontact" study with a sample of 15- to 20-year-olds found that those who had been frequent viewers of *Sesame Street* at age 5 had significantly better grades in English, science, and mathematics; read more books for pleasure; and had higher motivation to achievement (Huston, Anderson, Wright, Linebarger, and Schmitt, 2001).
- Use of educational technologies accounts for

at least 11 % of the total variance in the basic skills achievement gain scores of fifth-grade students, as measured in a 10-year West Virginia statewide study (Mann, Shakeshaft, Becker, and Kottkamp, 1999).

This evidence is but a taste of the rich and compelling research studies that demonstrate students' ability to learn from video technology. Regardless of the means—be it television or computer, or even computer-delivered streaming video—when content is presented with purpose, the student can experience the content and attach the new information to that which is already known. This process of creating associations and making meaning is part of learning. Educational technologies expand our access to new information and support our efforts to make meaning (Marshall, 2002). Terry Cavanaugh from University of North Florida has pointed out that even science fiction movies can be repurposed to support effective science instruction, and Cathy Cavanaugh has used instructional video to teach technology.

Until recently, the gap between knowing instructional video can be useful, and the ability to create it or access it has been too great for most teachers to overcome. However, with the advent of video sharing sites like YouTube, Google Video, TeacherTube and SchoolTube, video sharing has become significantly easier. With the creation of digital video creation tools like Adobe Premiere Elements, iMovie, MovieMaker 2 and Photostory 3, movie creation has become much easier as well, and is learnable by almost everyone in 30 to 50 minutes.

The free software program from Microsoft, Photostory 3, can be used in many ways. Probably one of the easiest uses is to convert an existing writing assignment to a multimedia project. Photostory 3 lets you easily create narrated "mini-movies" using photographs. It also has a built in music generator that allows you to put your story to music, copyright free! If one thinks of Ken Burns' "The Civil War", this program will allow anyone with a computer running Windows XP to do something similar. Because the storyboard in photostory is linear, students are encouraged to organize their thoughts, in storyboard format, with easy to follow directions. Additionally, the pictures provide visual cues for both the creator and the watcher of the video. In my Human Growth and Development class, I have students create a video about themselves based on theories of human growth and development.. Students reflect on what Bandura, Freud, Erickson, Piaget, Vygotsky and others would say about them as they review pictures from their past. This allows, or forces, the students to view themselves from a different perspective.

In Children's Literature, some of my students have started to use photostory 3 as their medium of choice, even over PowerPoint, for "writing" stories for their classroom students. Many of the finished stories are wonderful tools for learning. Most of my students will not become published authors, but they can create great materials which excite and motivate their students to read.

Kindergarten through high school students, they can make their own "Book Trailers" to help other students get interested in books they have read. Students can scan, draw or take pictures related to the book, import the pictures into photostory, order the pictures, add narration to the pictures, and choose the type of music they want their trailer to play. Photostory3 then generates a movie based off of your pictures and narration.

One of the ways I have used Photostory 3 is in my Integrating Technology into the Classroom course at Dakota State University is by inviting the St. Thomas Elementary School's fifth grade to visit the lab where we hold class, then helping them build their own Photostory book trailer. Over the course of the hour, we help the St. Thomas students scan or take digital pictures, import their pictures to Photostory 3, add narration, motion and music. They take their "Movies", a short introduction of a book, back to their school to show on morning announcements, to their friends, and to their parents.

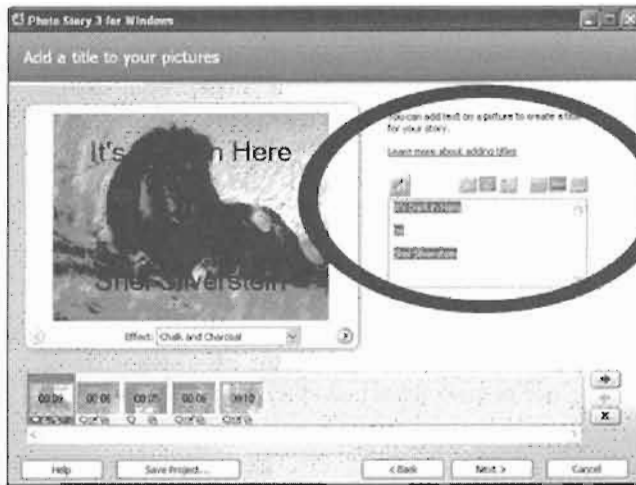
For example, one student, Brian, made a booktrailer of *Sammy the Seal* (http://www.homepages.dsu.edu/mgeary/booktrailers/SammySeal_Brian.wmv). The book trailer shows enough information to get other students interested in the book, but not so much that the ending is given away. Another example is <http://www.homepages.dsu.edu/mgeary/booktrailers/Zack's Alligator Goes to School.wmv>, a story of the (mis)adventures of a pet alligator named Bridgett. Making a book trailer is fairly simple, just follow these steps:

Phun with Photo Story 3 – Quick Start Guide

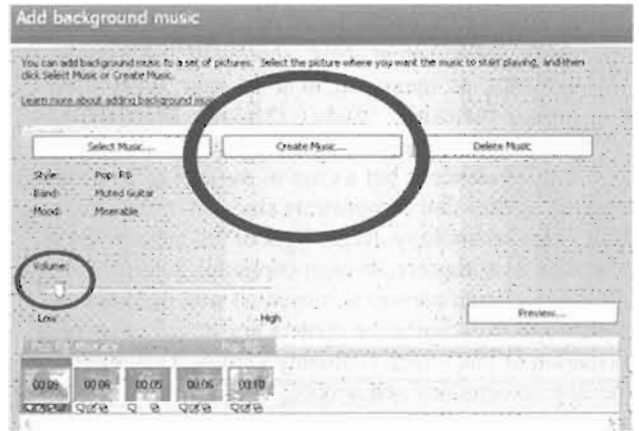
(Best practice – Before you start, create a folder for all your pictures, the project file and the movie file.)



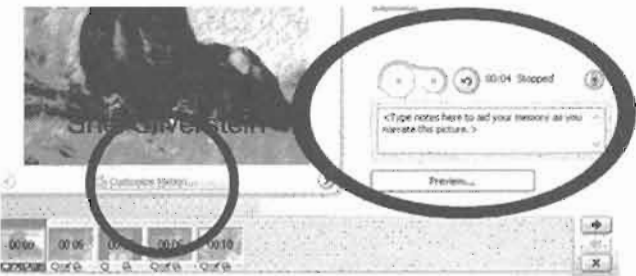
1. Import and Order your digital pictures. Hold shift key for multiple selections. You may want to create an all black jpg in paint for intros and credits, but this is not necessary. You can do basic cropping, remove red eye, and remove black borders (not usually recommended) here as well, but any in-depth photo editing is better left to another program, like Adobe Elements, before you import. Select NEXT.



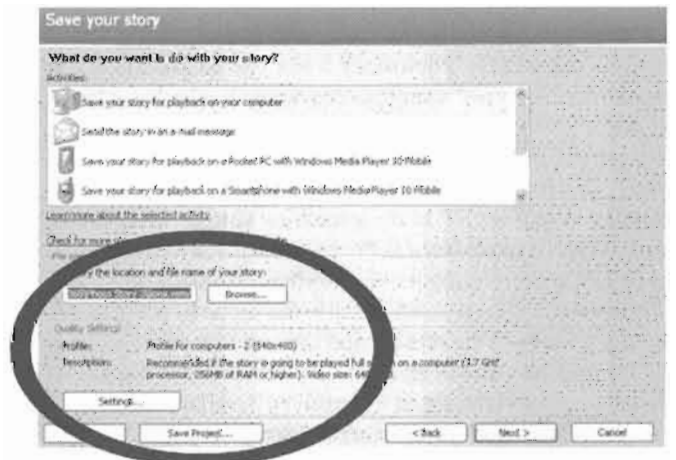
2. On this screen you can add text and photo effects. I do not recommend the photo effects, but text, carefully chosen and placed, may add to your book trailer. Notice you can make the text appear in the right, left, top, bottom or middle of your picture. This is also a good place to Save Project. Remember the name of your file, and where on the hard drive you saved it to. I found it helpful to have part of the book name, as well as the student's first name as part of the file-name. Select NEXT.



4. Here you can add music by either selecting a file from media player library (taken from a cd or downloaded) or Create Music. I strongly recommend the Create Music option, as there are no copyright concerns with that option. After you select "Create Music", you will be presented with several options. Select your Genre from the drop down box. Then Style from the next drop down box. Then select your preferred Band, Mood, Tempo and Intensity. This can take a lot of experimentation, but the default classical Amadeus, piano, sentimental frequently works well. IMPORTANT: After selecting music, be sure to REDUCE the VOLUME to slightly above LOW, or 1/8th of total volume. This will keep you from drowning out narration with music. Preview your Photostory. Select NEXT.



3. On this screen, you can add narration and customize motion. I recommend you add narration first, as that usually will dictate how long the photo is displayed. You will need to attach a microphone to your computer for this step. Preview your narration. If you do not like it, you can delete it and start over. Click "Customize Motion" to select the motion and duration of your photos. This is a very powerful effect, made famous as the "Ken Burns Effect" for his use of the technique in the Civil War PBS series. You can add transitions here, as well, but I do not recommend it to begin with. Later, a cross fade transition may be desirable. Use the remaining steps with caution. Select NEXT.



5. Select "Save story for playback on computer". Browse to the folder you created at the beginning of this project. Select that folder. The movie file will be the same name as your project file. A descriptive file-name is better than the default "Photostory". The best Quality Setting is usually set to "Profile for Computers 2 - 640 x 480". Save Project. Select NEXT.

6. Your movie, with narration, pictures, and music is created! Click Play Movie, and your Windows Media Player will be launched!

Photostory 3 can be a great literacy tool to enhance your student's engagement! If you would like to share your students' booktrailers on the web, please send them to me at: Mark.Geary@dsu.edu.

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A POEM FOR COMPUTER USERS OVER 40

A computer was something on TV
From a science-fiction show of note.
A window was something you hated to clean
And ram was the father of a goat.

Meg was the name of my girlfriend
And a gig was a job for the nights.
Now they all mean quite different things
And that really megabytes.

An application was for employment,
A program was a TV show,
A cursor used profanity,
And a keyboard was a piano.

Memory was something you lost with age,
A CD was a bank account
And if you had a 3-inch floppy
You hoped nobody found out.

Compress was something you did to the garbage,
Not something you did to a file.
And if you unzipped anything in public
You'd be in jail for a while.

Log on was adding wood to the fire,
Hard drive was a long Edsel trip on the road.
A mouse pad was where a mouse lived
And a backup happened to your commode.

Cut you did with a pocketknife,
Paste you did with glue.
A web was what the spiders spun
And a virus, well, that was the flu.

I guess I'll stick to my pad and paper
And the memory in my head.
For I hear nobody's been killed in a computer crash,
But when it happens, they wish they were dead!

Anonymous

Read A Good Book Lately?

If you already have a recent book for which you would like to write a review or if you would be interested in receiving a free book in exchange for writing a review, please e-mail: dornseif@tampabay.rr.com