

CMSI 252
MULTIMEDIA APPLICATIONS
Spring 2005

DVD Authoring “Post-Mortem”

Here’s a summary of the comments and observations that many of you made on your DVD authoring experience, in no particular order:

- It takes more time than initially thought.
- Asset preparation doesn’t just include the final material shown to the user (slideshows, clips, audio) — as much time, or more, can also be taken with “incidental” assets such as menu backgrounds, overlays, buttons, and others (or, in terms of what is in the notes and handouts, these are assets that are *repurposed* for the *view* or *controller* elements of your application).
- Preparation is critical; the amount and quality of preparation (prospectus, specification, assets) corresponds to the later smoothness of authoring the DVD. Level of detail is a close corollary to preparation — the more detail you establish in your specification, the smoother the actual authoring process becomes later.
- The abilities of the DVD-Video spec are, in many cases, easily surpassed by some of your ideas, and it was necessary to scale back. Conversely, DVD-Video resulted in the addition of new ideas in some cases.
- There was a general preference to use a “pro” authoring application like DVD Studio Pro to build your projects, but due to time and learning curve constraints, many went with a consumer-level application like iDVD. Most of you immediately felt the limitations imposed by the consumer level, however.
- Transferring projects from one computer to another is harder than it appears — mainly because DVD authoring holds *links* to your assets as opposed to the assets themselves, primarily due to file size constraints. Unless one is always conscious of exactly where your assets resides, transferring projects from one computer to another may be error-prone.
- Unpleasant surprises can and will arise: lost data, copyrighted assets, insufficient or under-powered tools. While these may throw major monkey wrenches in your work, in general their impact can be minimized (or, at least, made oh-so-slightly less painful) by better preparation and organization.

The overall feel seems to be that DVD authoring can be challenging and time consuming, but that learning it is generally worthwhile and its results are satisfying. DVDs are also acknowledged as an excellent deployment platform for multimedia applications today, given that they are easy to share with others as long as your application’s requirements don’t significantly exceed the current capabilities of the technology.