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## Interface Literacy: Screencasts, GUIs, and Computer-Mediated Authorship

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# Interface Literacy:

Screencasts, GUIs, and Computer-Mediated  
Authorship

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- **New composition includes the literacy of print: it adds on to it and brings the notions of practice and activity and circulation and media and screen and networking to our conceptions of process. It will require a new expertise of us as it does of our students. And ultimately, new composition may require a new site for learning for all of us.**

# Graphical User Interface Literacy

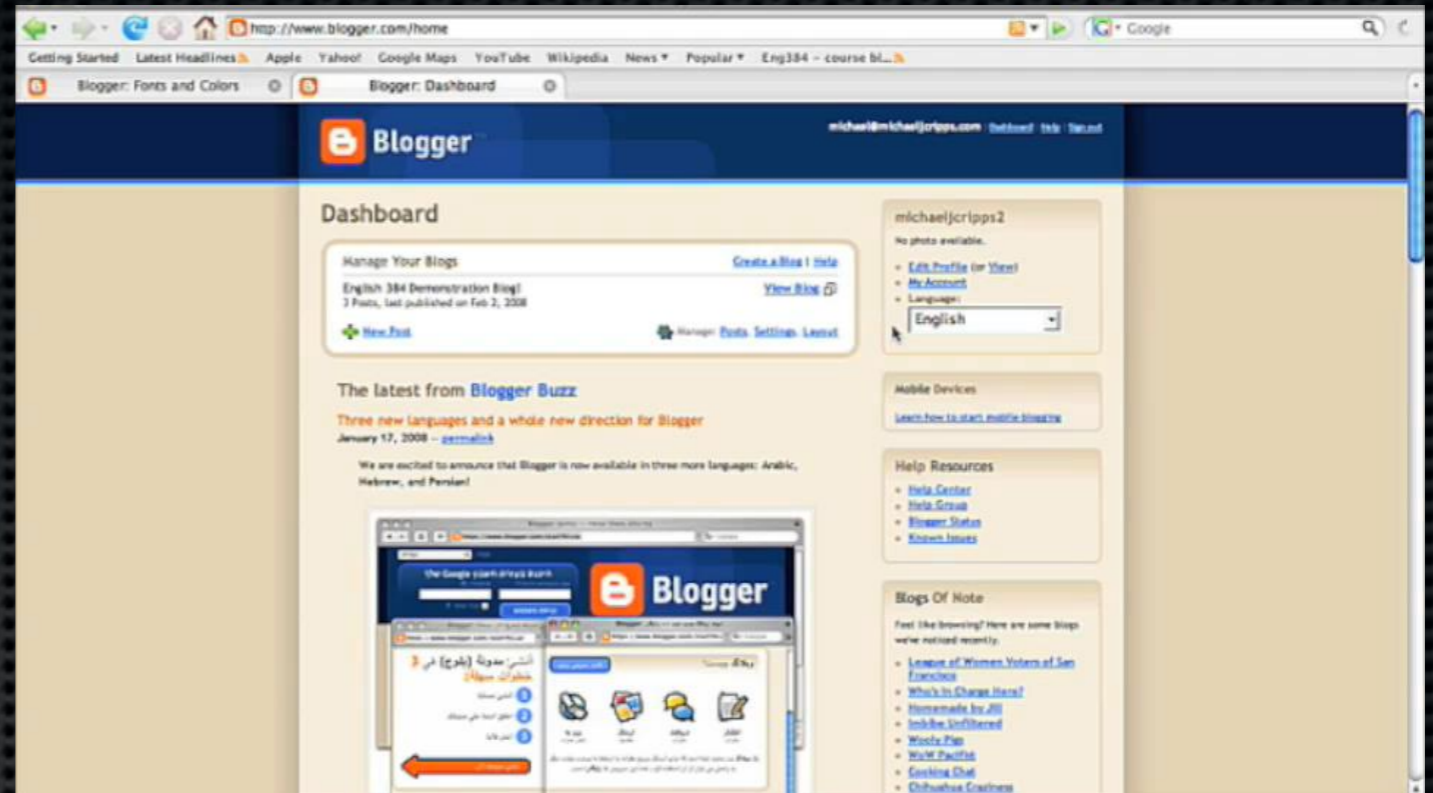
(Turner, Sweany, and Husman, 2000)

- **Operating System Literacy**
- **Internet Literacy**
- **Hypermedia Literacy**

# Hypermedia Literacy & Interface Literacy

- The ability to “identify available resources and use contextual cues” to navigate a program, as well as the ability to adapt to an unfamiliar program or website (Turner, Sweany, and Husman, 2000, p. 41).

# Video Podcasts & Screencasts



- Students prefer video podcasts over print handouts (Copley, 2007)
- Video-based instruction yields gains in satisfaction, comprehension, and retention relative to text-based instruction (Choi & Johnson, 2007; Su, 2008)

# Screencasts as Software/Interface Tutorials

- **Screencasts are videos that capture user interaction on a computer screen to demonstrate GUI navigation**
- **A technically viable medium for video-based instruction widely used on the web**
- **Addition of voiceover to video makes screencasts practical as tutorials**

# Screencasts as Software or Interface Tutorials

- Apparently common in distance learning (EDUCAUSE, 2006)
- Emerging as part of information literacy instruction for libraries (Peterson, 2007; Kerns, 2007)



# Course Context - Students

- 300-level English elective, **Writing for Electronic Media**
- Students primarily majoring in communication technology, a program with concentrations in digital video, computer graphics, and systems & applications
- Some English majors, as well as others

# Course Context - Writing Projects & GUIs

## ■ Projects

- Weekly weblog
- Personal website & e-portfolio
- Collaborative writing in a wiki

## ■ GUIs

- Blogger
- Adobe Dreamweaver & Photoshop
- Mediawiki

# The Challenge: Balancing Software & Writing Instruction

- Some software instruction is necessary in a course about genres of electronic writing practiced in electronic media.
- Class time spent teaching a software tool is time not spent exploring such issues as blog writing style, elements of web authorship, or collaborative writing in a wiki.

# The Screencasts

- **Blogger**
- **Photoshop**
- **Mediawiki**
- **Dreamweaver**

# • Google/Blogger

- Get a Google Account
- Get a Blogger Blog & Post
- Feed Your Blog Posts
- Feed Subscriptions with Google Reader
- Blogger Templates
- Blogger Page Elements
- Blogger Fonts & Colors

- **Adobe Photoshop**
  - **Basic Header Graphic in Photoshop**
  - **Faux Column Technique for CSS Layouts**
  - **Create Navigation Buttons**

- **Mediawiki**
  - **Logging in to Mediawiki**
  - **Adding Links and Creating New Pages in Mediawiki**
  - **Styling Text in Mediawiki**

- **Adobe Dreamweaver**
  - **Grabbing a Layout Template and Stylesheet**
  - **Defining Your Site in Dreamweaver**
  - **Quick Tour of the Dreamweaver Interface**
  - **Create a New Page based on a Template**
  - **Modify the Template 1 & 2**
  - **Internal Links, External Links, Email Links**
  - **Cascading Stylesheets Introduction**
  - **Modifying Cascading Stylesheets 1, 2, & 3**
  - **Crediting Sources with a Comment**
  - **Border Designs in CSS**
  - **Insert a Header Graphic & Link to Home**
  - **Insert Rollover Navigation Buttons**



# Data Sources

- First-day survey on information technology and use
- Student access to screencasts via Google Analytics & Webalyzer
- Post-semester focus group discussion

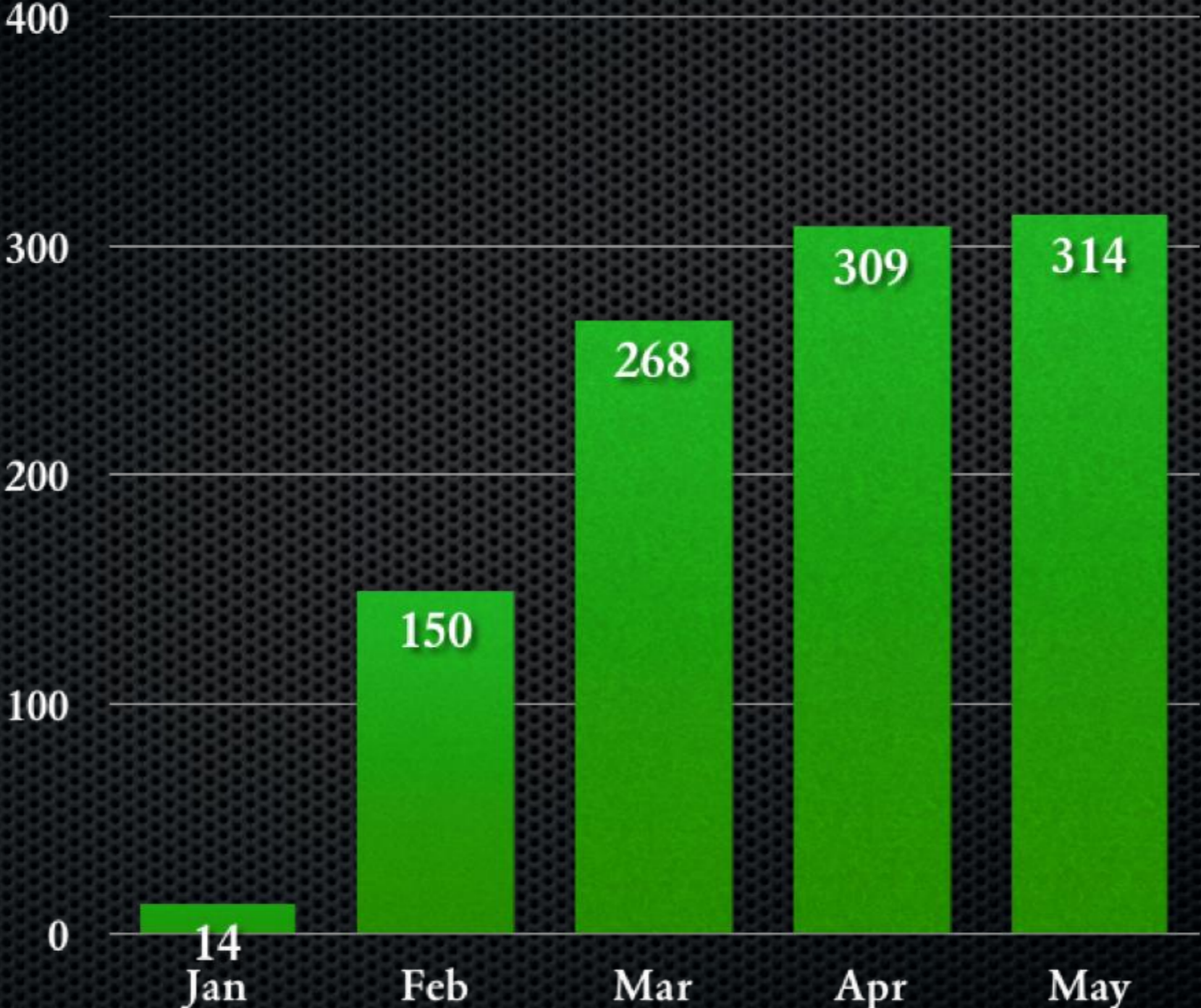
# Information Technology/Use Survey

- 8 of 11 students responded
- 4 women; 7 full time students
- All own laptop/desktop/both & have high-speed internet
- Actively engaged with IT for social purposes (texting, IM, social networking)
- 6 report that IT use improves learning and makes it more convenient
- Much less active with online authorship and course-based communication

# Server Logs

## Screencast Data Transfer

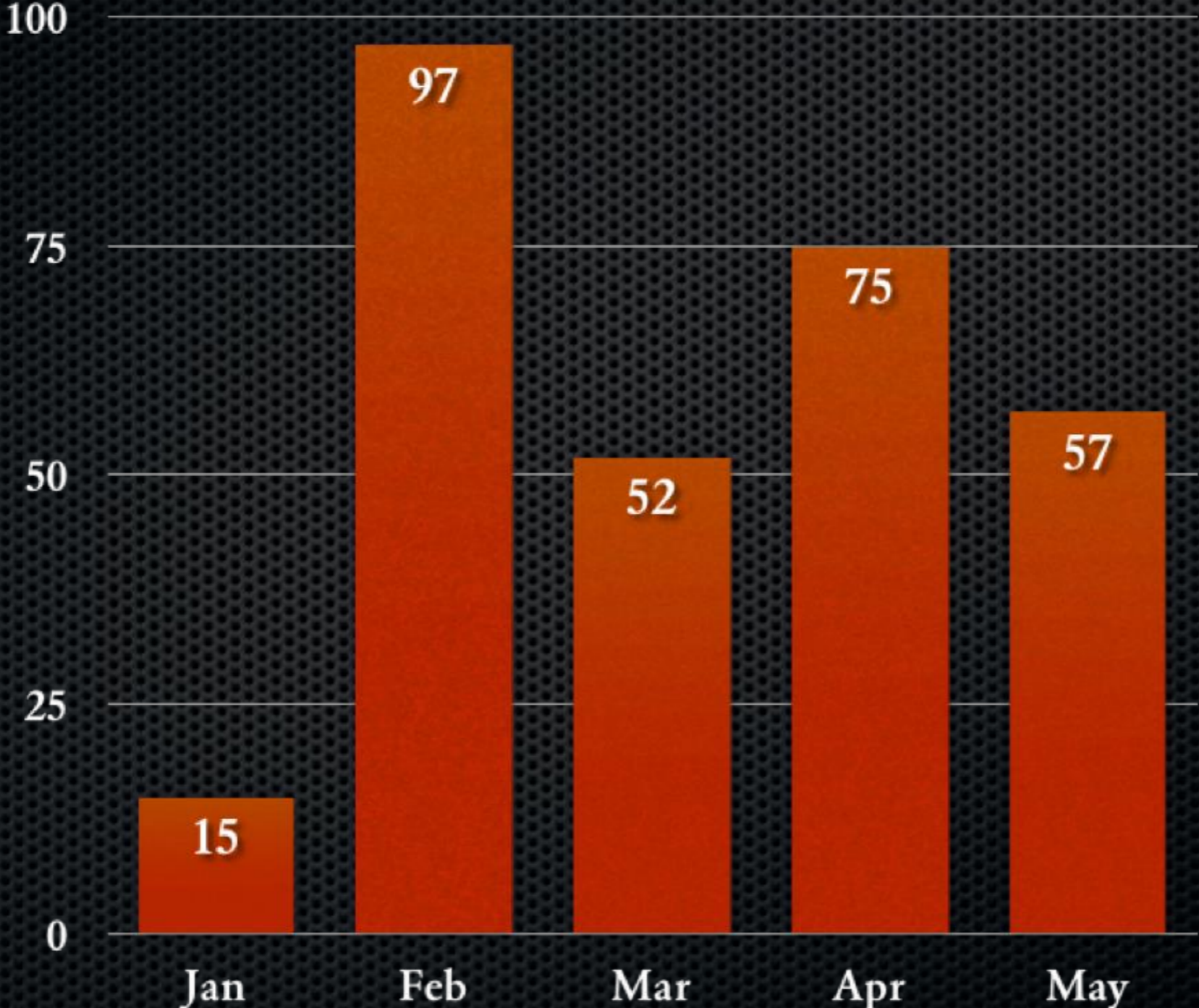
■ Data Transfer (in MB)



# Server Logs

## Screencast File Downloads

Screencast File Downloads



# Server Logs

## Very Wide Variation in Usage

- 4 students accounted for 92% of screencast downloads (3 students accounted for 75%)
- One student downloaded 40 files (210 MB) in March
- Another student downloaded 37 files (204 MB) over two logins in May

# Focus Group

## Audio-Visual GUI Aid

- Value of screencast is conjunction of GUI navigation video and voiceover with explanation.
- “I want to hear someone tell me, ‘This is what this does and this is where you put your information.’ I need to hear this or I am going to get lost.”
- Fast-forward, pause, and rewind become audio-visual reading strategies

# Focus Group Interface Literacy?

- Difficult to explore in focus group
- Personal interest is a factor in adaptability
- Building to complexity is important
  - “When you started with Blogger and I got confident with that and you introduced something else, I was kind of motivated to learn...”

# Challenges & Directions

- Production is time consuming given limited use
- Rethink measurement of Interface Literacy concept, perhaps through think-aloud protocol (Crowther, Keller, & Waddoups, 2004)
- Very small study
- Consider Just-in-Time Teaching (JiT'T) framework in course context



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