Mentoring of Media

Testing the Waters of Learning: A Paradigm for Quantitative Assessment of Production Concepts in a High School Media Curriculum

By Linda Bartrom

This column is more classroom seatwork oriented than past Mentoring of Media columns. As part of an educational program, progress reports, quarterly grades and the semester grade for learners in media, no matter what their success with their in-studio production skills, still need to provide a traditional assessment of progress for students. The language of media is highly idiosyncratic and the recall of terms and acronyms in both articles as well as conversation validates a student as nothing else can.

A question that repeatedly arises concerns this pervading concern over academic assessment and how to go about it. No matter how focused a production class is, and should be, on the production itself and the role learners play in that effort, the academic community remains convinced that every course can be at least partially assessed on facts, and recognition and retention of their meaning.

The study guide and test which follow are not concrete-cast, but rather a sharing of what I use for teaching and testing here in Orange County, California; they may prove at least a starting point for use in your program. The paradigm provided divides concepts, vocabulary and acronyms into pre-production, production, post-production and industry terminology. The goal when I developed these materials was for the study guide of each component to be specific enough to account for necessary knowledge, coupled with and followed by a test which would not be so difficult as to dilute the importance of the production component of the curriculum. The four components could be used for the four quarters of the school year as they are designated, but that is only a suggestion. The test can be Scantron scored due to the multiple-choice format. The one included here assesses the Pre-production and Production components of the study guides. Below you will find concept study guides that may therefore be used for the first 2 quarters and the semester test that assesses the first two. I would be interested in knowing reactions to and revision of these tools: my e-mail is lbartrom@hotmail.com

Concept Study Guides by Quarter

1. Pre-production terms

Storyboard: a visualization of the order of a piece, using representative frames for each shot or sequence to show a visual skeleton of the piece.

Script: Typed sequence of talent behaviors and lines

Producer: assembles the entire project including finances

Writer: creates the project concept or plot and writes the script

Director: controls the technical coordination of talent and technical crew during production

Rehearsal Talent studies storyboard and practices script delivery

2. Production Terms

Talent: personnel appearing in the project

Technical Crew: personnel using equipment to record project and talent including director, sound technician, switcher, C.G., grips, gaffers, cameramen and floor manager

Character Generator: (CG) a device that allows the user to display text and numbers as well as graphics with their video production. Some uses: a title, credits, subtitles for foreign films, and animated logos. Person operating the CG.

Noseroom: when shooting a profile of person, leave more space in front of them in the direction they’re facing.
Pan: to follow action with the camera on a tripod moving up and down.

Scene: a sequence of events with a pre-designed beginning and end.

Scenery: the background people, sounds, and objects that are included in scene

Segment: a designated section of a tape (usually a scene or group of scenes)

Shot: a part of a scene with the camera generally in one position

Shoot Tape: to record a scene or scenes on tape

Tilt: to move camera up or down

Truck: to move the camera and tripod left or right

Wide Angle Pan: to move camera while taping from on end of the scene to the other

Zoom: moving focus from telephoto to wide angle or wide angle to telephoto

CU: close up shot (takes in head and shoulders)

Dolly: moving tripod and/or camcorder in and out

Dub; copy of original tape or film.

ECU: extreme close up (takes in full face, or even closer)

ELS: extreme long shot (far away view of person or place in shot)

Fade: to get from black to light (fade-in) or light to black (fade-out)

Focus: to make picture clearer (auto/manual)

Headroom: to frame person in picture with space above head (not cut off)

LS: long shot (to get most of a person or place in a scene)

MCU: medium close up (to take in ¾ of scene or person)

3. Post Production Terms

Edit: select the footage wanted for the final production where graphics, text, transitions or other special effects can be added to the footage.

Editing Suite: a collection of equipment for editing videos.

Graphics: pictures from a computer, editor, or other source

Generation: In analog editing, each time you rerecord or make a copy, you create another generation of the tape or “go down another generation.” Each new generation loses signal quality, hence the term generation loss.

In Point: the first frame of a clip

Out Point: the last frame of a clip.

Linear Editing: Central to the old paradigm of using tape, editing from data stored on media that is not instantly accessible because of the continuous and linear layout of the data and therefore slower than nonlinear editing. “Analog”

Nonlinear Editing: Central to the new paradigm, editing from the data stored on a digital storage device, which allows for speedy random access of clips. “Digital”

Off-line Editing: in traditional editing, the stage at which most content and editing decisions are made-usually on less expensive equipment and using dubs(or work prints) of the original source material. At this stage, an EDL is often created to facilitate an on-line session.

On-Line Editing: in traditional editing: The stage at which most content and editing decisions are made-usually on less expensive equipment that reedits a piece, using the original or lowest generation material, and adds all finishing touches.

Protocol: the language that is used to control a video deck. (rs-422, rs-232, lanc, visca, control-m, control-s, v-lan, Panasonic, ag-1960, Sony serial, etc.)

Rendering: the process (and time) required to programmatically create a special effect transition. Rendering times of non-linear editing systems are typically slow compared with linear (tape-to-tape) editing systems.

Overlay: adding a graphic and/or text to an image on the tape. Graphics and text are usually put on top of the video image. (Photoshop)

EDL: an Edit Decision list depicting the segments chosen for the final tape

Text: words from computer or editor

Types of Video Tape: there are more then 20 video formats in the market, each of these formats are sold for a specific purpose and market in mind here’s two:

VHS-1/2 inch: familiar home video format. When you rent a movie from your local video rental store you get it in this format. A standard T-120 cassette plays tow, four, or six hours at SP (standard play), LP (long play) and ELP (extended long play), respectively.

VHS: C ½ inch: used in some older home camcorder. Although this format resembles a pack of playing cards, it can be played on a standard VHS machine with a plastic adapter that fits around the VHS-C cassette.

Artifact: an area within an image or a characteristic of an image- for example, weird shimmering, jaggies, or other undesirable distortion – that is the result of a system limitation.

Betacam: professional component video ½ -inch recording format

Bin: a place for storing clips.

Clip: as a noun, a piece of footage.