The Best of Both Worlds: Teaching with a Tablet PC

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Abstract

When teaching a lecture course, the instructor must make a choice between using the chalkboard, which generally creates a more interactive atmosphere, and using some type of presentation software (such as PowerPoint), which diminishes student interaction but allows for the presentation of complex text book figures. A solution to this problem we presented in this workshop – the tablet PC. With a tablet PC, an instructor can combine the best aspects of chalkboard teaching with PowerPoint teaching. A tablet PC is essentially a laptop computer that has a touch-sensitive screen which allows the operation of the computer to be controlled by a digital pen or fingertip. This allows the user to annotate digital documents on screen, similar to writing on a piece of paper. For teaching purposes, this allows an instructor to annotate diagrams in his or her preferred presentation software, enhancing the educational experience for the student. A tablet PC may be purchased as a stand alone computer (~$1000 US), or a regular laptop can be converted into a tablet-like PC using tablet converter accessories (~$100 US). This workshop discussed information about the two tablets that the authors use: The Lenovo Thinkpad Tablet Computer and the Wacom Bamboo Tablet Converter Accessory. In this workshop, the features of each tablet and/or tablet accessory were demonstrated. Since using these tablets, both authors have had positive feedback from students about the use of these tablet PCs.

About the Authors

Jessica Goldstein received a BA in Biology from Macalester College and a PhD in Molecular Cell Biology from Washington University in St. Louis, MO. She is currently a Lecturer in the Biology Department at Barnard College in New York City where she is responsible for coordinating Introductory Biology Laboratory courses for majors and non-majors.

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