

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.

Sarah Salm received her PhD in Plant Pathology from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. She is currently an Associate Professor at BMCC, where she teaches Microbiology, General Biology and Anatomy and Physiology.