CAL POLY GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS STUDENTS COLLABORATE ON PUBLISHING PROJECTS WITH QPS

Quark Publishing System Helps Future Writers, Editors, and Designers Gain Professional Publishing Experience in Class

In the Fall of 2009, students of Professor Mike Blum's GrC 338 class in the Graphic Communication Department at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, were the university's first to use Quark Publishing System® (QPS®). QPS is a dynamic publishing system that, when installed in a classroom setting, allows future professional writers, designers, and editors to get real-world experience collaborating with each other using advanced publishing technology.

Blum traditionally opens the class with a project focused on digital content management and variable data publishing. With QPS installed and available to the class, his students have the opportunity to work as they would on-the-job in an editorial environment to collaborate in a single workflow, improve their teamwork, and save significant time with an easy-to-use system.

Over the summer — in fact, just three weeks before students arrived — Blum and GrC Technology Specialist Jon Sehmer self-installed the QPS software. Reviews about the set up experience were very favorable, according to Sehmer.

"Our QPS experience has been outstanding. Quark's enterprise support team was there from the beginning to ensure an easy installation, including integration with our campus Active Directory," Sehmer said. "Setting up the Quark License Administrator and installing the licenses was seamless. We had very few technical issues during the project and when did the service and support was excellent."

With a successful implementation, QPS was ready for the students and their first project of the year, which was a brand-new twist on a time-tested Cal Poly GrC assignment: Create a promotional piece highlighting the GrC program for incoming students and recruiting efforts. But this time, in groups of three or four, the students would replace the 4-page brochure with a 12-page pamphlet.

The project included defined roles so that the students would be able to take advantage of the robust collaboration tools of QPS. Students in each group took on roles as project manager, production artist, layout artist, or creative director and were assigned their own three-week timeline for the project.

Standard text about the GrC program was provided to each team, but students were also encouraged to bring the program to life with a theme of their choice. Teams chose themes that varied from original poems with a Shel Silverstein aesthetic, to text dished out with a foodie flair. Simple faculty head shots were provided, but several of the groups did their own photo shoots and most of the faculty were depicted in the final pamphlets as aspiring chefs, pop-comic icons, or LEGO figurines.
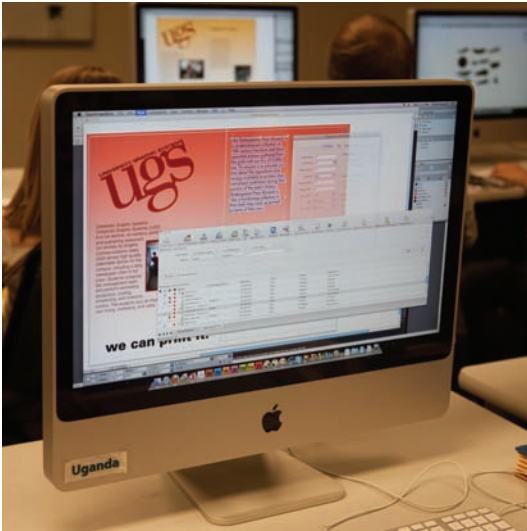
Quark

Students use Quark Publishing System to dynamically publish class projects.

Like any creative project with a short timeline, Blum made sure to emulate real-life conditions. Mid-way through the project he informed the class that two concentrations had changed their names, and one had been dropped. There's nothing like changes from a client — mid-stream or late-term — to affect the workflow. But, the students were well-equipped to handle the challenge with the dynamic publishing power of QPS.

As they created their pamphlets, the students – who are typically very busy with heavy workloads – raved about the features of QPS that they appreciated the most. The most cited feature was the QPS WebHub, which gives students the ability to interact with the workflow through a simple browser. No VPN necessary. No long trips to campus after hours or during scarce open lab time.

The "Team Spicy" group enjoyed the ability to shoot the faculty images in Camera RAW, and stay away from e-mailing the large file sizes by loading the assets into the system via WebHub. And, it was a necessary fail-safe for the "Comics" group, which had a team member out sick for a week. With the WebHub, she was able to keep up with her tasks and the progress of the group from the comfort of the couch.

Even though many of the layout artists had minimal experience with QuarkXPress, they found the primary layout application to be an easy transition from the familiar Adobe interface and a rich complement to the workflow.

The students also thoroughly maximized the use of Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator files within their layouts. Most chose native PSD and AI formats as the default file types, and most of the projects had a heavy illustration component. All flowed seamlessly into QuarkXPress layouts.

"We've been favorably impressed with our initial use of QPS. It was relatively easy to install and setup. Our students quickly took to using it and seemed relieved to no longer have to exchange files with their team members using flash drives or e-mail attachments," said Blum. "They made use of the status settings for each project asset so it was easy for anyone on the team to spot problem areas at a glance. Overall, we've found QPS to be an intuitive and easy-to-use solution for group collaboration."

Blum is already plotting some tweaks and enhancements to the project and environment to enrich the educational experience — nearly 40 students are enrolled in the class for each of the next two quarters.

"We've been favorably impressed with our initial use of QPS. It was relatively easy to install and setup."

— Mike Blum, Professor
Graphic Communications
California Polytechnic State University

If you want to learn more about this particular success story or about how Quark's dynamic publishing solutions might benefit your business, please visit quark.com or contact us by email or phone using the contact details provided below. If you are interested in having your own success story published by Quark, please contact Quark's PR team at pr@quark.com.

North America
Quark Inc.
1800 Grant Street
Denver, CO 80203
solutions@quark.com
www.quark.com
+1.800.676.4575
+1.303.894.8888

Europe
Quark Media House Sàrl
06-408 Strand
London WC2R 0NE
United Kingdom
solutionseu@quark.com
+44 (0)20 7632 5608

Asia
Quark India Pvt Ltd.
A 45 Industrial Area
Phase VIII B Mohali 160059
Punjab, India
solutions@quark.com
www.quarkindia.com
+91.172.2299.131

Japan
Quark Japan K.K.
West 248 bldg.
2-4-8 Ebisu-nishi
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo
150-0021 Japan
SolutionsJapan@quark.com
japan.quark.com
+81-3-3476-9440