Wearable Computing/Wearable Composing Assignment: Exploring the Design, Use, and Feasibility of Glass for Use in One’s Field
Assigned by Ann Hill Duin in Writing with Digital Technologies

Introduction

This assignment is designed for advanced undergraduates. In this assignment, students explore and document—by means of a multimodal composition—the design, use, and feasibility of a wearable device for use in writing and/or in their fields of work. Students should be encouraged to explore how wearables represent a new mode of inquiry and production as well as the device’s potential impact on society.

Students should also be encouraged to document their exploration in a multimodal/multimedia composition. A multimodal composition provides a less linear, more interactive reading pattern that supports the practices of real-world audiences. Students should have prior experience with various modes including text, audio, video, and use of web content development platforms (e.g., blog and/or ibook development sites).

In the case described here, undergraduates were enrolled in a writing-intensive course, Writing with Digital Technologies, as part of their major or minor program in Technical Writing and Communication. This course explores digital writing technologies and provides opportunities to assess writing situations and make appropriate decisions about digital form and production. Students learn the basic building blocks of writing in internet environments (text, sound, images, video, interactivity) as well as the vocabularies, functionalities, and organizing structures of Web 2.0 environments, how these impact understanding and use of information, and how to produce these environments (i.e., multimedia internet documents) for interactivity and use.

As with the other assignments, as part of deployment, students should be oriented to the functions of the Glass device and how to activate and use them:

- Record videos
- Record sounds
- Take photos
- Record messages
- Send messages
- Take notes
- Translate voice to text
- Make phone calls
- Search the web

Image from [http://www.wareable.com/google-glass/google-glass-2-how-should-google-fix-it-726](http://www.wareable.com/google-glass/google-glass-2-how-should-google-fix-it-726)
Prior to Deployment

Prior to the deployment of Glass or other wearable device, ask students to explore and share resources of interest about the device. For example, the following are sites and commentary that students shared prior to the deployment of Glass in the Writing with Digital Technologies class:

- **Google Glass shines**
  This LA Times article is more of a testimonial from an 18-year-old college student. I found it interesting because he brought up some real life and in-class uses for GG that I could relate to and possibly use in the future.

- **Everything You Need to Know About Google Glass**
  This page is a great overview of google glass in the aspects of what is inside GG, why we need GG, when/where to buy GG, and how GG will change the future.

- **How to use Google Glass at Work**
  This shows how Google Glass can be used in an office setting.

- **Google Glass as a Hands-Free Instruction Manual**
  A YouTube video about the Google Glass application as a hand-free manual to help people complete tasks.

I also recommend that students read and discuss James Porter’s work “Recovering Delivery for Digital Rhetoric” as a means to provide a common vocabulary for discussion during use of the device. Porter (2009) describes a theoretical framework for “digital delivery” that consists of five topics: body/identity, distribution/circulation, access/accessibility, interaction, and economics, and each topic functions “strategically and heuristically to guide digital writing” (207). Porter prompts readers to “think of these as the common topics (koinoi topoi) of delivery—i.e., the categories that operate heuristically and productively across multiple situations to prompt rhetorical decisions regarding production” (208).

During Deployment

During deployment of the wearable device, encourage students to use these five topics—body/identity, distribution/circulation, access/accessibility, interaction, and economics—as a means to discuss and/or blog about how the wearable device influences their communication and composing.

Also during deployment, students should describe their specific interests related to the wearable device. For example, in the course noted above, some students chose to focus on use of the Glass device in their chosen fields of work:

*I’m interested in seeing how instructional manuals can be updated for use with Google Glass. A lot of instructions, especially technical manuals, are most frequently used by people who need both hands to repair or work on the item at hand. Google Glass could
provide a way for users to read the manuals without ever having to take their eyes off the product that they are working on.

Others expressed interest in comparing Glass to other devices:

My first idea, which kind of just popped into mind the first time I watched a video about GG, is comparing it to GoPro in terms of purpose, usability, and quality for first-person video and images. The second idea is to explore how GG affects health. Many of us in class seemed to experience headaches or strained eyes when wearing GG, and I’d be interested in researching more about GG harming or helping health.

And others planned to investigate the potential use of Glass to meet unique needs:

I’m interested in exploring how GG can help those with disabilities, particularly people who are visually impaired or blind. GG could be used in a number of ways to augment the information a person who is blind is able to take in, beyond sound and touch. Glass could collect raw data of the visual surroundings and give that information through GG, via an earbud. I would like to look into the ways wearable technologies would give greater independence to the visually impaired.

Possible Exercises

Also during deployment, use or develop a short exercise similar to the following to help students examine other multimodal compositions and platforms they might use for their own work.

Locate and share one or two “exemplar” multimodal compositions that might serve as a guide for your own work.

Consider the various modes used (text, images, audio, video, etc.) in these compositions:

● How do the images and words work together?
● How do they work against creating meaning?
● Which mode creates the best meaning for the message?
● Are there other modes that might convey a clearer message?

Enhance your critical lens.
For your own composition, identify your audience, purpose, and intended effect. Based on this, identify effective and ineffective modal combinations.

Identify an effective writing platform for your work, and share why you have chosen to use this particular platform.

In the Writing with Digital Technologies course, most students chose to use blogs as platforms for their multimodal compositions. Others generated iBooks using the Apple platform. Some examples of student blogs include the following:

○ The New Face of Technology
http://brittah-springer-glass.squarespace.com/#glass-overview
Peer Review

Schedule multiple drafts of the assignment, and include peer review at each stage. For peer review, use the following prompts as a guide:

What platform did the writer choose to use for this assignment, and how does the functionality of the writing tool influence your engagement and interactivity with the composition?

Please provide comment and suggestions on the following:

- how the composition engages the reader (interactivity, social interaction);
- how the writer signals audience, purpose, and intended effect;
- how the writer uses elements of visual rhetoric;
- how the writer uses the affordances (capabilities) of each modality effectively; e.g.,
  - print affordances typically involve linear, sequential logic;
  - audio affordances include accent, tone of voice, mood, or music;
  - video affordances include movement, process and greater sense of reality; and
  - images “show” meaning to an audience.

Also consider how the writer’s choice of modes influences the effect of ethos, pathos, and logos on readers, e.g., how the use of music, images, or videos works to persuade the audience; or how the writer’s choice of links constructs a specific ethos.

Criteria for Evaluation

For evaluation, use (or revise) the following:

Your multimodal/multimedia composition will be graded based on effective use of multiple modes as well as depth of exploration of how this technology is potentially reshaping writing, self, and interaction with the world.

Reference