DIGITAL CONTENT

WHAT IS DIGITAL CONTENT?

Digital content refers to text, music, film, sound, graphics, images and apps, that are created, used, shared, and preserved in a digital format. The development of the digital content industry involves the effort and contribution of content developers, device manufacturers, and Internet service providers, who closely rely on one another.

Before You Read

Work in pairs or small groups. Draw from your own experience to answer the following questions:

1. Digital content changes human life. Discuss how digital content has changed our lives in the following aspects:
   • Education
   • Entertainment
   • Communication
   • Work

2. What is the role of digital content in your daily life? Name the types of digital content you frequently have access to and the functions they play in your life.

3. How is digital content created and what are the ways of sharing the content with others?

Reading

Digital Content—Whenever You Want, Wherever You Go

In the digital age, information is created, stored and transmitted digitally. Users have access to this content via personal computers, TVs, mobile phones, MP3 players and other digital devices. The content is first obtained and then can be edited, copied and shared extremely easily, generally without limitations with regard to time and place. Digital content is
5 transforming how people **make sense of** the world and how they communicate and interact

with one another.

The development of digital content can be traced back to the time of the birth of the computer decades ago, but it didn't catch the attention of the public until the Internet became easily accessible in the early 90's. This breakthrough technology made the transmission of digital data easier. However, not until recently, when more and more mobile devices came equipped with the **capacity** of accessing, downloading and viewing digital data, did digital content creation gain increasing attention. Consequently, more people are engaged in developing digital content to fulfill **end-user** needs.

In addition to fun and entertainment features, consumers also call for digital content that fosters lifelong learning. For example, the MIT OpenCourseWare (OCW) broke the barrier of higher education by offering free accessibility to the general public. Whoever is interested in MIT's undergraduate and graduate courses can access the course materials at no cost. The establishment of OCW in 2000 opened up a new **paradigm** of virtual learning and made a significant impact on how the educational community **perceived** the value of sharing educational resources online. More and more universities have followed MIT by launching similar online learning projects like the Open Yale Courses by Yale University, and Berkeley Webcast by the University of California at Berkeley.

Consumer demands for diverse, meaningful, and useful content published on user-friendly platforms also helped shape recent digital developments. Content consumers are looking for a **seamless** user experience, which requires no extra effort to learn the **interface** or deal with technical **obstructions** when viewing the content. For todays consumers, purchasing, downloading and viewing digital content should be just as easy as one, two, three. Apple's iTunes is a revolutionary example that provides an all-in-one platform for consumers to browse, purchase, download and listen/watch selected content within a few clicks. Users can log on to the iTunes Store and buy music, audio books, movies and TV shows. They can also download different genres of podcasts and thousands of applications on the same platform. Consumers have already changed their habits of viewing content from **linear** to **on demand**. They prefer to listen to, watch or learn what they are interested in, instead of passively taking whatever is given by the media providers.

Another new trend in the Web 2.0 era is to turn the public at large from simple consumers of media into creators, **distributors**, and publishers of their own content. For example, millions of people all over the world are involved in creating content on Wikipedia. Millions of others upload their photos to Flickr and release video clips on YouTube. Anybody can be a content creator by publishing works online for sharing or for purchase. This "homemade" content can

40 increasingly become **ubiquitous** through **widespread** use of smartphones and other portable devices like Apple's iPad or Samsung's Galaxy Tab with mobile broadband service.

Along with the transformation of the consumer role in the development of digital content, copyright issues have become more controversial than before. Some believe that the **essence** of the digital age is based upon sharing and 'fair use' of the content, while others argue that
45 the copyright should be fully controlled by the creators. **Placating** people's concerns about the distribution of digital content will remain a major challenge in the years ahead.

After You Read

Based on the reading, answer the following questions:

1. What are some new trends in the development of the digital content industry?
2. What types of digital content are more attractive to consumers? Why?
3. What is the MIT OCW project? Why is it significant to digital content consumers?
4. How did the spread of mobile devices change digital content development?
5. What are some obstacles in the development of digital content?

Vocabulary Comprehension

General Vocabulary

*This vocabulary is used for general purposes. Words with a * come from sections other than Reading.*

capacity	n	the ability to do something
perceive	v	to notice or realize something
obstruction	n	the act of taking action in order to prevent someone from doing something or prevent something from happening
distributor	n	a company or person that supplies goods to stores
ubiquitous	adj	existing or being everywhere, especially at the same time
widespread	n	distributed over a large area; happening or existing in many places, or affecting many people

placate	v	to appease or pacify, especially through concessions as well as by overcoming distrust or hostility
*attribution	n	the act of attributing something to a particular cause or person, especially the act of saying that something was written, said, painted, etc. by a particular person
*derivative	n	something that has developed or been obtained from something else
*essence	n	the most important part of something, usually the part that gives it its basic character

ESP Vocabulary

*This vocabulary is commonly used in the field of creative industries. Words with a * come from sections other than Reading.*

end-user	n	someone who buys and uses a product, especially computers or software
paradigm	n	a typical example or model of something
seamless	adj	changing or continuing very smoothly and without stopping
interface	n	a point where information passes from one part of a system to another as between a computer and a person or between distinct parts within a computer
linear	adj	progressing from one to another in a single series of steps
on demand	adj	whenever a person or people want something
*intuitive	adj	naturally discernable; spontaneously insightful

Expressions

make sense of something	to understand something that is complicated or unusual

Exercise

Fill in the following blanks with the vocabulary from the box, and make changes if necessary. Each word is used once.

essence	paradigm	derivative	seamless	linear
attribution	perceive	interface	capacity	on demand

1. EverythingEverywhere, the company jointly formed by the two major UK telecom companies, will offer _____ roaming between their networks in the near future.

2. Digital TV equipped with the _____ to record TV programs that we do not want to miss is extremely helpful.

3. The popularity of the Apple iPad, along with e-readers such as Amazon.com's Kindle and Barnes & Noble's Nook, has left publishers scrambling for the best way to embrace this emerging digital _____ .

4. Video _____ refers to a pay-per-view television service in which a viewer can order a television program from a menu and have it delivered instantly to the television set, typically with the ability to pause, stop, rewind and fast forward programming.

5. This song is shared online with a creative commons license labeled with no _____, which means people can freely distribute the song but no modification is allowed.

6. Traditional television broadcasts have been _____ since their inception, in that each technological advance has been incrementally associated with improvements for a passive audience. A person viewing these broadcasts has no control over what is being viewed.

7. Digitalization of old art works can help recapture the _____ of the past and help us distribute and appreciate these artistic masters.

8. Some teachers and parents are insufficiently sensitive to children's abilities and can underestimate a child's intellect or wrongly _____ a child as being lazy.

9. The new version of the word processing application is faster and has more features than its predecessor, while the _____ remains easy-to-use.

10. Website owners and bloggers have to create a/an _____ policy to ensure their readers know how to redistribute the content of their sites properly.

Corpus

In previous lessons, we used **JTW** to find some frequent combinations of certain words or phrases. In this lesson, we are going to learn to use the "alternatives" function. Based on the word or phrases

you type in, **JTW** will suggest related words that can be used to replace the current ones. In addition, the bar under each word combination shows the similarity of the meaning between the original entry and the replaced one.

Search "make sense of" on **JTW**, and click "alternatives." Write down suggested alternatives and give an example for each of them.

Replacing "sense" in "make sense of," what can you find?

make		of

Replacing "make" in "make sense of", what can you find?

	sense	of

Tasks

Writing

Podcasting: Broadcast to the world

Have you ever dreamed about hosting a radio program on the air? This is not a dream now. Everyone can create podcasts and share the content on the Internet. A podcast (or non-streamed webcast) is a series of digital audio- or video-files that are released as episodes and often downloaded through web syndication. This format allows people to create a talk show about their favorite topics and share the content with others on the Internet. You are going to create your own podcast and share it with your classmates online.

Techniques and Usages

1. Find a topic that you are passionate about.

2. Decide the genre and format of your podcast. Will it be an interview, a news report format, or a story-mode?

   An example of a podcast structure:

   2-1 Theme song

   2-2 Welcome message and Introduction

   2-3 Announcements

   2-4 Main body of the podcast (e.g. Song introduction for music podcast, breaking news, interview, tips of the day, or reviews for other formats of podcasts.)

   2-5 Final comments / Closing remarks

   2-6 Theme song

3. Decide the frequency and length of the program you would like to publish as your podcast.

4. Write the script or outline of your podcast. This will help you create fluent speech in your podcast.

   Steps to construct the script of your podcast:

   4-1 Jot down ideas you would like to share.

   4-2 Consider your audience: Who are they? Do they have background knowledge about the topic? What do they want to hear in your podcast?

   4-3 Create a bullet point outline to list all the things you would like to discuss that is related to the theme topic.

   4-4 Do rehearsals. You may first read your script aloud and do a test recording. Play it back and check if there is anything missing.

   4-5 Modify and finalize your script before recording.

5. Record your audio file. Audicity is a great tool for recording and editing audio files or try Podomatic at www.podomatic.com to record your podcast and publish it online.

Exercise

1. *Work in pairs to discuss the genre and format of podcast you would like to make. Make a final decision on this.*

2. *Write up the script.*

3. *Record the podcast and publish to Podomatic.*

4. *Share your podcast online with your classmates.*

ESP Focus

Creative Commons (CC): From "All Rights Reserved" to "Some Rights Reserved"

An increasing number of people share their creative works online. The traditional "All Rights Reserved" label does not seem to follow the current trend for reusing, reproducing and distributing digital contents online legally.

What is CC and how does it work?

In 2001, a nonprofit corporation, Creative Commons (CC), was founded, with the aim of making it easier for people to share and build upon the work of others, consistent with the rules of copyright. Since then, a series of projects have been designed to support and expand the public domain. The CC movement has brought digital content into a new phase, where the term "All Rights Reserved" might soon become history. More and more digital content released online is now labeled under the CC rules, indicating that the content can be freely adopted, adapted and shared. CC protects not only content creators but also the people who use the works. In addition, CC provides flexibility for the creators to decide how they want to share their work by explicitly informing the public of the terms in detail.

The creators can choose from the following four conditions to fit their work:

Attribution – **(by)**
People who use your work have to give credit to you.

ShareAlike – (sa)
People who use your work can modify or build on your work and distribute the modified work, but they have to share their work under the same CC term as you did.

NonCommercial – (nc)
People can use your work for any purpose but commercial use.

No*Derivatives* – (nd)
People can freely distribute, display and perform the original copies of your work, but they cannot modify your work without your permission.

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Types of CC Licenses

CC licenses are based on a combination of the above four conditions. The creators can make the decision based on the format of their work and how they want to distribute it.

For example, the sign on right indicates that the creator allows you to modify and redistribute the work if you also share your work with the same CC license.

What do the following licenses mean?

Exercise

Here are three content creators who express their ideas of how they would like to share their creativity online. Choose a suitable license for each of them to ensure that their creativity is available to everyone for free and is used legally. Draw the license symbols in the space provided.

1. Jason Chen wrote a song to share on his blog. He hopes that everyone who enjoys this song can share it as-is with others, but he doesn't want his song remixed.

2. Mavis Lin would like to share her photos on Flickr. She hopes that people who like the photos can build upon her work for non-commercial use as long as they distribute the modified work in the same manner.

3. Kate Wang would like to share her teaching materials online with other teachers. She does not mind how the material is modified, adapted or shared as long as the users give credit to her and share with others in the same manner.

Have you published anything on-line? If so, what did you publish? What type of Creative Commons licenses would you use to publish your work? Why?

Speaking

Creating digital content for the world: Let titles talk first

Without limitations on genres, styles, length or platforms/forums for sharing work, the spread of Web 2.0 and intuitive software tools makes creating and publishing digital content powerful and simple. It is easy to share your expertise or to invite contributions to a collaborative work in any particular field. People can easily release their latest songs or share their creations online. Regardless of the form of digital content, communicating to an unknown and heterogeneous audience is a big challenge to any content creator. Online users tend to scan the content and decide whether it deserves their time. A precise and attractive title plays a key role in the reader decision-making process. In this section, you are going to learn some techniques for writing an appealing title for the digital content your classmates have created.

Techniques and Usages

Here are the steps to follow before naming the digital content:

1. Read/watch/listen to the content thoroughly to ensure a comprehensive understanding of it.
   Make sure the title you give the work accurately conveys the meaning.
2. Review the content to determine tone and emphasis.
   This may influence your word choice for the title.
3. Determine where the work will appear and decide appropriate keywords for the content.
   If the content may be found via RSS and viewed on mobile devices, choose brief keywords.
   Keywords determine how the work can be found on search engines, so do not choose ordinary words.
4. Be concise.
   Avoid long titles for focus and strength.

Exercise

1. *Go online and find some podcasts that you are interested in. Pay attention to the titles of the podcasts and listen to the program to see if the titles properly convey the theme and content of the podcasts. Write down the titles of two podcasts you found. What do you think about the titles? If you were the author of the podcast, would you name them differently?*
2. *Listen to a few of your fellow classmates' podcasts, assuming that the digital content will be submitted to iTunes. Give a title to each file of digital content that properly addresses the*

theme and draws attention. Exchange your titles with a partner and discuss the differences in your choices. Then decide which one is better for attracting subscribers.

Post your title ideas for the podcasts you reviewed on the board, and discussion your title ideas with the original creators. Do they agree with your assessment of their program? Do they like your title ideas? What would they change?

Did you know?

Unlike born-digital, digital archives provide another significant type of digital content that change the way we access, appreciate and acquire knowledge. Digital reformatting is a process of converting analogue materials into the highest quality digital format. This will ensure that all kinds of records and cultural heritage will be preserved in digital format. Digitalization of texts, charts, images or sounds that were created through analog processes allows precious knowledge and records of civilization to be easily accessed by the general public and handed down from generation to generation. For example, the National Palace Museum has been doing digital archiving of their collection items including fine Chinese paintings, calligraphy, antiques, and rare books. All of the digital reformatted masterpieces can be preserved sustainably and shared with everyone around the world. Without visiting the museum themselves, people can get to know more about the collection of the National Palace Museum online.