
Rick's Place

Notes, Thoughts, and Random Musings on the Online Experience
by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

iTunes, iPod and yOu

In the entrance hall of the British Library is an ancient Missal, digitally scanned and reassembled and displayed on an electronic lectern - part of the Library's established *Turning the Pages* project. Passers-by, library readers and visitors, touch the screen to explore the pages of this book - and most these days, do so with an easy familiarity. The names of the old artefacts - the Missals, and the Hours - are strange to us, but not this form of seeing them. Despite our reluctance to read ordinary books in digital format, (who reads novels on-screen?), and our apparent adherence to print culture, we are further down the path to screen-based forms of reading, and to a real translation of learning into the electronic age, than we know.

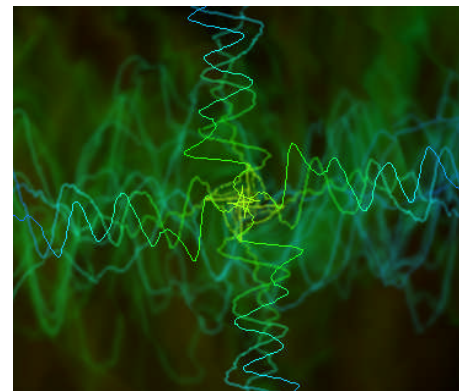
Digital World

MacUser UK magazine

The digerati among you are aware that in this holiday season, some new words are creeping into the vocabulary of the marketplace. One hopes that at least one of the words above is familiar to you. iPod is a pack of cards sized mp3 player...

"Stop!" I hear you say, "What is an mp3 player? How did I miss mp1 and mp2?" mp3 files are the musical equivalents of Zipped or StuffIt'd computer files. They take the native digital audio format of the music stored on compact discs and compress it to 1/8 the size, without a tremendous loss of quality. iPod is a small mp3 player that interfaces with your computer via a cable and stores and plays, through the earphones or attached to amplified speakers or your stereo, up to six hours of your favourite CD tracks, either in the order you have set or at random. There is a great ethical issue about the creation or "ripping" of mp3 files. As we all know, it is illegal to duplicate recorded music and give it to others. The record industry turns a blind eye to copies made for personal use such as making a tape to play in the car, but baulks at the wholesale distribution of such tapes and now compact disc copies. You may recall the stories of Napster, a place where people shared their mp3 files and allowed others to copy them to their computers. They have now been shut down, but many such peer-to-peer sharing systems still exist. (Ask your students...they know!)

iPod is controlled by iTunes, Apple's free mp3 player and library management software. Yes, Virginia, you can carry your music files on your laptop. Even better, for those of you who dimly remember either the 60s or Scriabin, you can also have a groovy light show to accompany your music. I have captured a picture of part of *The Rite of Spring*, by Stravinsky. These light shows are created by the wave form of the music as it passes through the digital to analogue convertor. They are "programmed" in that the the graphics generator goes through a cycle of creating different graphic combinations and colours, but the shapes drawn are still created by the music. Say good bye to stacks of compact discs, vinyl albums, and the like. Scan in the covers, scan in the liner notes, convert them to text, create a database and index,...



The Rite of Spring, - Stravinsky

"Excuse me...in all your excitement...you've left out a few things"

What's that? Left out a few things. Oh, you mean copyright, ethical use, the number of hours in a day required to do all of these things? Certainly you could just add this into your routine categorising of lesson plans by national standards, curriculum subtopic area, and age level cross indexed by your reflective evaluation of the lesson and list for improvement; additions to the database of new choral music/band music you have purchased and sorted for range, voicing, difficulty, seasonal propriety, and matched it to the appropriate learning goals and standards set by your curriculum; updating your web sites for the next month's goals and activities for your courses and performing group; read, researched an answer, and responded to posts in the AMIS Elementary list, choralist, and all of the other listservs to which you belong....

We live in the real world, in real time. Many would say we actually live in a surreal school world on hypervariable time. As the holidays arrive, take a few moments to be thankful for your loved ones, your profession, your students, and the gift of living in these interesting times. Take time this break to load up an mp3 player (iTunes is free, Macintosh users), "rip" some of your favourite holiday tracks (or digitise the performance of your students) and play them back via the computer with the visualiser on. Perhaps your portable can become a part of your holiday decorations, a "lavalamp-top", as the visualiser works even when the speakers are muted.

We have been given a great gift to live in these times, to hear new sounds, to see new things. Let us never lose our wonder at the new experiences which continually surround us.

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information on iTunes and iPod can be found at <http://www.apple.com>
