

Real-Time Shared Document Editing in the Classroom

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Real-Time Shared Document Editing in the Classroom

A. Description

This teaching innovation takes advantage of some recent technological developments to streamline and improve the effectiveness of in-class group work and discussions. These new technologies include the ubiquitous wi-fi access across the Union campus as well as the Google Docs service, which allows for the online editing of a word processing document by multiple users. Google recently enhanced its service to enable real-time editing, meaning that all edits appear on all other users' screens as the edits are being made.

Here is a typical sequence of events for using this particular teaching method.

1) Before the class, I create a new Google word processing document and type some questions into the document. Depending on the circumstance, the questions might be study-type questions that guide students toward key learning objectives for the day, or discussion-type questions that stimulate critical thinking and reflection. I have used the study-type questions primarily in my History of Music I and II classes and the discussion-type questions primarily in my Gateway to Christian Learning section.

2) I share the document with all students in the class (i.e., give online editing access to them).

3) Once in class, I break the students into groups and assign one or more of the questions to each group.

4) The students discuss the material amongst themselves and then, with wi-fi enabled laptop computers, type their final responses into the document.

5) I use the main classroom computer to project the document onto the screen at the front of the room for all to see.

6) Each group in turn presents their thoughts or findings to the rest of the class. Further whole-class discussion ensues.

7) After the class, I review the document for accuracy and clarity, making any adjustments as necessary.

8) I convert the document to a PDF file and post it on the course website (Blackboard). This document serves as a set of notes for the students to study and as a record of the contributions of each group.

This method obviously requires a significant number of laptop computers. More and more students these days are bringing laptops to class, but it is not safe to assume that every student can bring one. I recently received a Teaching and Learning Grant from the university for the purchase of five Chromebooks (inexpensive, internet-only laptop computers) to supplement the computers brought to class by students. Every group always has at least one computer to work with, but typically a group has two or more machines at its disposal.

The new teaching method described above has become an important part of my toolkit. Over the past year I have used the strategy to good effect several times in each of my History of Music classes and in my Gateway to Christian Learning section. At the end of this submission I have appended a document (a lesson on instrumental music in the Renaissance) that is one of the results of the new learning process.

B. How the project differs from current teaching methods

To my knowledge, I am the only member of the Union faculty to use real-time online document editing in the classroom setting. Furthermore, in discussions with my professional colleagues in musicology at other institutions, I have not encountered any other person that employs this method. In the field of music history, lecturing is the dominant mode of imparting knowledge in the classroom. I do lecture some, but I also employ a variety of active learning strategies, including the one described here.

The strategy takes advantage of technology to improve on a method I had already used. Previously I would assign questions to groups of students and they would write their responses on paper. Then the papers would be put under the document camera and projected onto the classroom screen. It was a fairly effective strategy, but it suffered from some weaknesses. If students were missing some key points or making some factual errors, I wouldn't be able to catch and correct those until the presentation phase. Then it was also difficult and messy to make corrections before scanning and posting the papers on the course website. With the new real-time online document editing method, I can easily monitor the students' progress by watching the document while they are still working in groups. If necessary, I can walk over to a group to give the students further guidance and steer them in the right direction. In addition, I have complete control over the content and can easily make clarifications and adjustments before finalizing the document and posting it on the website.

C. Evaluation

Real-time shared document editing in the classroom has some potential pitfalls that need to be carefully managed. First, it requires all students to have or create a new Google account. They must give the instructor the email address with which they created the

account, and the instructor must send “sharing invitations” to all these addresses. In other words, there is a certain necessary up-front investment of time and energy to get the system set up. I occasionally ran into difficulties in which a student couldn’t access the document for some unknown reason. However, with more experience and with improved communication with the students, I expect difficulties of this nature to be minimal in the future. A second potential pitfall is the availability of wi-fi in the classroom. If wireless internet access is interrupted for any reason, the whole process comes to a halt. This happened once and I hadn’t prepared a backup plan. I can work around this by having a printed copy of the questions on hand for distribution to the students (that is, go back to the old paper-based method). Third, my new method gives students a great deal of freedom, and that freedom can be misused. There is a temptation to “clown around” by interfering with other groups’ answers or by posting silly statements or pictures. I don’t mind students having a bit of fun, but at one point I did need to draw the line and clearly articulate my expectations for keeping on task. Once the “wow” factor faded and the students became accustomed to this technology, they settled down and no further problems occurred.

On the positive side, I have found real-time editing of shared documents in the classroom to be a very effective learning tool. Rather than passively accepting information from the professor, students are actively creating knowledge for themselves and others. The method also leverages the power of social circles (so important for this millennial generation) by allowing the students to work in groups first before presenting to the whole class. As stated above, I am able to monitor their progress during the answer-creation phase and intervene as necessary. After the class I can edit the material further so that it is a clear and concise resource for the students.

The Google Docs service has now added spreadsheets and powerpoint-type presentations to its menu of document types that can be shared and collaboratively edited. I look forward to brainstorming how I might use these new possibilities as well to enhance significant learning in my courses.

Norton Anthology of Western Music #62: Tielman Susato, Dances from *Danserye* (ca. 1551)

1. Give a brief overview of Susato's life and career.

He lived from about 1515 to about 1570. He was born near Cologne in Germany, and he moved as a young man to the Flemish city of Antwerp. He was active as a member of the town band, as a composer, and as a prolific music printer.

2. Describe the *Danserye* publication. To whom was it marketed?

It was published in the Nether-Dutch language, and included all types of dances. The dances were intended to be easily played on all types of musical instruments. It was marketed to the common people, to non-professional musicians.

3. What evidence is there that these dances may have been arranged from, or at least modelled on, chansons?

There is a precedent for Susato arranging chansons for instruments, though we don't know what the source may have been for these particular dances in the NAWM example. The pieces are scored for four parts, and the parts are labelled as if they were chansons (superius, contratenor, etc.).

4. What does "basse danse" literally mean? Describe the physical movements of this dance. How did music for the basse danse change from the 15th to the 16th century?

"Basse danse" literally means "low dance." It is called this because the feet remain close to the ground, in contrast to some other dance types. It is danced by hand-holding couples in a column, with small bows and a series of walking steps completed by drawing the back foot up to the leading foot.

In the 15th century, the music for the basse danse consisted of a notated tenor line, with other instruments improvising above. In the 16th century, every part was written out, and the music tended to be in the shape of four-measure phrases, in triple or duple meter combining to make larger, repeating sections.

5. Describe the structure of the basse danse *La morisque*. In the NAWM recording, what have the performers done to alter the structure, and what does this tell us about instrumental performance practice in the Renaissance?

The basse dance *La morisque* (The Moor) consists of two repeated sections. This structure, later called binary form, would become the standard form for dances in the 17th and 18th centuries, and it was expanded upon in various ways in the mid- to late- 18th century to create sonata form, rondo form, and other standard formal patterns.

The performers have repeated the first strain (i. e., played the A section again) at the end. This tells us that the performers viewed the music a *guide* to performance (much like a lead sheet today) rather than as a score to be strictly followed.

6. What instruments perform this work in the NAWM recording? What do you hear that is *not* notated?

The first run-through of each section (A and B) is performed on double-reed instruments, probably including shawms. The second run-through of each section is performed by recorder and viols. The return to A at the end of the performance is played on all instruments together (double reeds, recorder, viols). This performance adds percussion, which is not notated in the score. Pictorial evidence from the time suggests the presence of improvised percussion parts.

7. What do “pavane” and “galliard” literally mean? Describe the movements of these dances.

“Pavane” literally means “from Padua” (an Italian city). It is a slow, stately court dance of the 16th and 17th centuries. “Galliard” is from the Italian “gagliardo” meaning “vigorous.” (In Middle English, “gaillard” means strong and lively; in Anglo-French it means bold and stalwart.) The galliard is a vigorous dance with **KICKS** and **JUMPS**.

8. Describe the form and the tempo of the pavane and the galliard.

They had the same form: AABBC (three sections, each repeated). The pavane had a duple meter in slow tempo, while the galliard had a triple meter in a faster tempo.

9. What is the typical connection between pavanets and galliards? How are Pavane *La dona* and Galliard *La dona* related?

The galliard’s melody is derived from the pavane’s. These could be heard as two variations on one theme. This particular pavane and galliard have the same title, “La dona (The Lady)”. They use noticeably similar melodic material, though the harmony is different in places.

10. In the NAWM recording, what instruments perform the Pavane and Galliard *La dona*? How do the performers deviate from the score, and what does this tell us about instrumental performance practice in the Renaissance?

A recorder consort performs these pieces (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass recorders). The players embellish their parts on the repeats, which is historically accurate and shows that some degree of improvisation was the norm.