

WHY COLLEGES SHOULD NOT TEACH 'PHOTOSHOP'



OK a deliberately controversial statement.

As far as I know, no college specifically teaches students how to use only one make or model of camera at the expense of all others, they don't only provide one camera for students, so why do they insist on doing exactly that when it comes to software packages?

I can only speculate that they are either unaware of the alternatives or suffering from a degree of brainwashing.



Only use this camera!

As a trainer in the area of Digital Imaging I am constantly asked to teach 'Photoshop', it has become the euphemism for image manipulation in the way that Hover is for vacuum cleaner. The difference is that while nobody believes that that have to buy a Hover to clean their house, a surprisingly large number of people think that have to have Photoshop to work on images.

A large part of this is down to the way the subject is taught in colleges and universities.

It seems that the people making the decisions in those establishments are unwilling to look beyond Adobe products, and hence they are the only ones available to the students. Most colleges buy Apple Macs although they could use PCs for half the price, because they mistakenly think they are 'industry standard'. In the organisation where I work there are 11 computers used for digital imaging – running two photographic labs and a wide format printing system and not one of them is a Mac.

I am often asked by ex-students how they can 'get hold of' a copy of Photoshop.

Costing £600 it is not surprising that few ex-students can afford to buy it. Because of the conditioning they receive most never think of the cheaper or free alternatives. It is quite possible to operate efficiently and professionally using open source alternatives as I have been doing for the past 5 years.

I don't think that Adobe Photoshop should be banned, but I do feel strongly that they should not be teaching 'Photoshop', rather they should be teaching DIGITAL IMAGING, good practice, techniques and methods of working with digital images. How to crop and adjust images for print and screen use. They should teach about resolution, file sizes, file types, the possibilities and limitations of resizing, colour profiles and working with layers.

These processes can be carried out equally well using a range of software both proprietary and open source, Photoshop is just one of the options. Part of the teaching process should be about looking at possibilities and alternatives.

This is a call for inclusive training, teaching technique and opening up the process not taking a blinkered approach in a one product only environment. By offering software alternatives that are free and freely available (by giving them copies of the software) you can enable students to work without financial penalty in an environment that offers support and opportunity.

Education should be about opening doors not closing minds.

Becta is the Government's key partner in the strategic development and delivery of its information and communications technology (ICT) and e-learning ...

Extracts from report published 2008

Schools and colleges can also do more to drive forward choice in the context of home-school use. We recommend in Section 5 that, whenever possible, they should make students, teachers and parents aware of the range of free- to-use products that are available, and how to access and use them.

In our interim report we were clear that the ICT industry could play a part in facilitating greater choice of office productivity software. We recommended that suppliers should facilitate choice to schools, ensuring that computers for this market are shipped with a choice of office productivity suites on the desktop, and that ideally this choice should include an open-source offering.

Our consultations with the industry confirmed that there are no significant reasons why this recommendation cannot be delivered.

Recommendations

We also recommend that schools and colleges should configure their systems in such a way as to ensure that they do not place impediments in the way of learners, teachers and parents who use alternative products (including free-to-use products) at home.

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Case Study

"I'm an art professor, and last semester I embarked on an exciting new adventure by erasing Mac OS X from nearly all of the Macintoshes in our **digital media lab and installing Ubuntu** in its place. The students' reactions to all this was inspiring. They felt empowered by the quality of the software and their ability to upgrade, share, and customize it freely. They also appreciated the immense array of additional GNU/Linux multimedia software available to them. And I found it inspiring how many of the students took enthusiastic advantage of other applications, not only by installing software via Synaptic from the Ubuntu repositories of more than 16,000 packages, but in some case by compiling source code from elsewhere."

<http://www.linux.com/articles/52758>

Written using Open Office, running on Ubuntu Linux
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