

SF State's New DIVA Takes Center Stage

Call her the Divine Miss D. This Fall, DIVA—the university's newest software star—will be coming to a computer near you.

She was born in an office where a funky orange clock rests on a breakout table. Tin-Tin posters adorn the walls. A comfortable leather couch sprawls in a corner, and there's a baseball glove on the table. Movie posters featuring familiar faces from campus lean against each other. No, it's not Google—it's SF State.

Andrew Roderick, Director of Computing for the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, and his team of six have created—over the course of five years—one of the most exciting players in the academic software arena. Daniel Koepke is the lead architect of the project, and his group has authored a world-class product and a model of software development. DIVA is an achievement which should make the university very, very proud.

DIVA—which stands for Digital Information Virtual Archive—is a digital file management and sharing system. But this isn't Napster. You can actually create, edit, and customize special DIVA Web Documents using your files—not just store, share and retrieve them.

Just about any sort of digital information can be dropped into your account page—from sound files (which are automatically converted to MP3s) to data sets to slide shows to RSS feeds to images and video (which converts to a Flash version that plays as seamlessly as YouTube). Blogs are another feature that will soon be available.

Faculty are given two distinct areas to store their information—one area for classes, and one for groups. With a password, your students can access your documents and multimedia within an easy-to-use website format. Each account is provided a generous 4 gigabytes of storage capacity. You can allot separate passwords for your Groups area, which the DIVA

team devised to support research, committee, or working groups.

"Research and service is a big part of what our faculty do at SF State—in addition to teaching," Andrew adds. "We understand that they're sharing research with people around the globe. They need a mechanism to make the research opportunities and communication easier."

If your research partner is in New Zealand or down the hallway, she can access your documents—even collaborate and edit them—when you provide a password to the group you're

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- Andrew Roderick

using for that project. Other material on your DIVA page—class syllabus, notes, etc.—stays protected.

If you're wondering about all the video, image and audio compatibility, don't—DIVA has done it for you. Once you upload your documents, they are automatically converted to DIVA friendly formats. All you have to do is drag and drop them where you want them on a page, and add descriptions, titles and other enhancements. No specialized knowledge or equipment is required. And no one can access them unless you give them the appropriate password.

Some of the documents in DIVA will be shared with the public. Should you wish to share yours, the DIVA team conducts an approval process to determine the pertinent copyright or Fair Use laws. DIVA Commons already contains a significant number of materials, all searchable or browsable with visual tags.

You can designate files to be shared with whomever you'd like—from your students to your department and college to the SF State campus to partner universities to the world. And to facilitate the process, DIVA will be working with Fair Use and

copyright attorneys to make sure that faculty stay informed about their legal responsibilities in using and sharing electronic information.

So how can DIVA help you? Let's take images. Instead of actual slides, you can use digitized images in a slide show. You can then store that slide show, add or subtract or reorder the elements within DIVA, and use it again next semester or the next time you teach that class. If you show it to your students during the class, DIVA even



automatically detects the resolution of the projector you're using—no more fussing with the focus.

What about audio? The Poetry Center,

for example, houses a world-renowned repository of readings from significant artists. These precious audio materials can be preserved through digitizing and then shared with students and scholars through DIVA. So if you want your class to hear anything from a 1938 recording of *The War of the Worlds* to Allan Ginsberg reciting "Howl", you can post it to your DIVA page. A special podcasting tool even allows faculty to quickly create podcasts using audio they upload or that is accessible to them within DIVA.

Video is just as easy. If you've made a video of a class lecture, just drop it in. If you want to play a Cold War "Duck and Cover" film—in any format, from QuickTime to MPEG—see if it's been digitized and add it to your content. Faculty can also link to and embed YouTube videos to share with their classes. Public domain films from the internet, home movies ... the possibilities are endless.

One of the DIVA team's goals is to encourage the digitization of information on campus. For example, the Treganza museum contains one of

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the best collections of Pacific Island basketry in the world. But—as Andrew points out—it's inaccessible. "They are locked away in a back room. So no one can handle them, and consequently, the information they represent is being lost. We're in the process of uploading those that have been photographed and make them available for scholars to examine, share, and research."

The double potential of teaching tool and research helpmeet is one of DIVA's finest contributions, and is representative of the joint teaching/research mission of its college. Behavioral and Social Sciences covers a wide territory, from Geography to Anthropology to History. "We have very diverse disciplines here, with specific technical needs. We wanted to create a system that was very encompassing," explains Andrew.

The effort took five years to coordinate and two and a half to build. Along the way, the BSS team took

on contract work for other projects to self-fund the DIVA effort. Their time, dedication and comprehensive planning is evident in the product, which is fully compliant with the ADA.

Fall will be the official launch of DIVA. Andrew—who has spent ten years at SF State as staff and also teaches in the Instructional Technologies department—is justifiably proud of the software. "If you don't need the specific student management features in iLearn, DIVA becomes a great alternative. It's like a simple drag-and-drop webpage—just take the files you're already working with, upload them and share them with students or colleagues. It's really a simple tool, and is designed as an option, an alternative, not a replacement."

The team is currently planning integration with iLearn and developing a pilot project program with other CSU

campuses. The DIVA squad is also forming an international work group to help design the next-generation of the software.

DIVA is a world-class product. It embodies the principles of best teaching practices, disciplined research functions, and the freedom and accessibility of dot com technology. It harnesses the marvels of the e-era in a spectacular fashion, and is a tremendous contribution to the academic community. And she's a home-grown girl. DIVA and team—stand up and take a bow.

You can experience DIVA and check the latest workshop schedules by visiting the website: <http://diva.sfsu.edu>. Find out what this incredible program can do for you, your research and your classes—request a DIVA account today!

Four Star Reviews

"I lead a number of research projects with a number of collaborators. I use DIVA to manage fieldnotes, interview recordings, transcripts, drafts of manuscripts and more. Collaborators from across the country and world—anyone with an email address—can access the materials, as long as I give them permission. It's allowed me to work easily with collaborators from the San Francisco Department of Public Health, a co-author in Tennessee, and SFSU students gaining valuable training and experience as research assistants. Life's a lot easier with DIVA facilitating the exchange of information."

Dr. Jessica Fields, Assistant Professor, Sociology

Research Associate, Center for Research on Gender and Sexuality



"I'm happy that the Art Department's Visual Resources will be a part of it. We just haven't decided how we're going to digitize 300,000 slides yet or if we want to do the whole collection. I feel that the DIVA project will be one of the campus' greatest resources along with the J. Paul Leonard Library. I've always felt that a good library is like the heart of any campus and now the DIVA project will be an important asset, too, with connections to many visual collections that are currently spread throughout the university."

Irene Andersen, Visual Resource Specialist, Art Department

"DIVA is an enormous advance for scholars who collaborate with each other. It provides significant benefits in the classroom as well. I already have graduate students working on datasets and documents in groups online in a very streamlined manner—they find the interface easy to use. Documents are stored and shared and easily searchable. As it grows over time, I think DIVA is going to be of enormous advantage to the academic community and the professionals who interface with it."

Dr. Trevor R. Getz, Associate Professor, History