

REVIEWER

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Managing Interactive Video/Multimedia Projects, by R.E. Bergman & T.V. Moore. Englewood Cliffs: Educational Technology, 1990. ISBN 0-87773 209-1, 215 pages, 39.95 (U.S.).

Reviewed by Richard A. Schwier

INTRODUCTION

This book provides a detailed description of the design and development of large-scale interactive videodisc projects, and couches the discussion within the larger scope of multimedia production. The material draws heavily on the IVD Project Manager's Workshop offered by IBM. Two things leap at the reader at first glance: the material is very comprehensive and well organized, and the focus seems to be on fairly large-scale development projects.

CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

This book is broken into two main sections: a guidebook for multimedia project managers, and a set of resources for project managers. The guidebook sets out a development model and takes the reader through each step in a complete multimedia development project. The second section, in the form of a set of appendices, offers a dizzying array of checklists, forms, design matrices, multimedia documentation, writing advice, references and a glossary.

Section One: The Project Manager's Guide

The Project Manager's Guide is made up of twelve chapters under four major headings: orientation, preparation, construction and implementation and management. These headings represent the major stages in a large development effort. Each chapter is organized into roughly four parts: an introduction (Preview of...); a context and brief overview of the content of the chapter (Looking Over the Territory); the actual content of the chapter; and a brief summary (The Last Word). If it sounds to you like there is a lot of structure to this book, I share your opinion. I found the structure comforting in many

ways, as I could use the book for brief overviews, thorough discussion or reference.

Orientation. The “Orientation” section introduces multimedia technology and provides an overview to the development process and the organization of the book. Three chapters define multimedia applications and systems introduce and describe a development model for multimedia projects, and discuss the roles and responsibilities of project team members.

Preparation. In its first chapter, the preparation section offers prescriptions for planning a multimedia project including such things as goal setting, resources, personnel and cost estimates. The next chapter deals with analyzing the application. Audience analysis, objectives, needs assessment and task analysis are all compressed into this chapter, under somewhat different (more corporate) labels.

Construction. Five chapters comprise the section on “Construction.” Collectively, these chapters address the major activities in the development process, and make the transition from “thinking about and planning” the project to making it come to life. The chapters include designing the treatment developing associated documentation such as storyboards and shooting scripts, producing the audio, video, text and graphics, authoring the context which synthesizes the various components, and evaluating the product.

Implementation and Management. The large-scale projects discussed in this book are evident in the last two chapters. Chapter 11, “The Implementation Phase,” describes the formation and management of the team and resources who will design, build and install the product in its new home. The last chapter covers the management functions for a project, including leadership, control and accounting.

Section Two: Project Manager’s Resources

As mentioned earlier, this section is really a collection of seven appendices. Appendix A offers a set of evaluation checklists for each of the project phases. Appendices B and C include the “Super Storyboard Form” and design matrices for planning treatments. Appendix D outlines the various types of multimedia documentation for the steps in production. Appendix E discusses how to write a successful “Request for Proposal,” and even contains four appendices of its own. Appendices F and G round out the resource section with a brief set of references and a glossary of terms.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE BOOK

I think it is particularly useful to have a book which thoroughly describes large multimedia development projects from a manager’s perspective. Because of the scope of many multimedia development projects, many less experienced developers may find themselves flirting with the corporate world and large

development teams. It is useful to have a document which uses the language of business (e.g., deliverables, RFP, vendors) to discuss fairly conventional instructional development ideas, especially when many of the contracts for this type of work will come from corporate contexts. I imagine some of my instructional developer colleagues will bristle a bit at the labels and concepts drawn loosely from ID models (does "validation" sound a lot like "formative evaluation"?). Still, if you are an instructional developer working with clients on large scale multimedia projects, you will be relieved to find a book which details the "business" side of things so well. Everything from production team management to budgeting is detailed, and the accompanying forms and appendices will be most useful. Why, Appendix E even discusses how to write an RFP. I suspect it was relegated to an appendix because the content fitted somewhat uneasily in the book, but many people will find the ideas helpful. In fact, if I were to offer one significant criticism of the work, it is that the authors offer very useful ideas, but they are sometimes lost in the wash of surrounding information. This may be partially a function of converting a series of workshops to print; in the workshop format, an instructor can shape the information for the audience -emphasizing some things and de-emphasizing others. This book seems to give equal importance to everything discussed, and leaves it to the reader to impose emphasis. Fair enough. Certainly the audience for this book will be sufficiently sophisticated to make those decisions.

Those in education may flinch at the size of the projects discussed in the book, especially given the modest and constantly threatened budgets we often face. This is not a reason to lay this book aside, because most (if not all) of the components discussed in the book have application for scaled-down projects. A \$20,000 project will go through the same steps of analysis, design, development, production, authoring and validation described in this development model as the \$200,000+ projects mentioned as examples. Because of the assumed size of projects discussed, the steps are certainly much more detailed than would be needed for most smaller projects. For example, Bergman and Moore discuss in some detail how to manage the implementation phase of the project, including such things as physical display planning, technical training of site personnel, a "roll out" plan for introducing the system, and coordination of complementary systems. This is not a criticism of the work, but merely a suggestion to readers that some picking and choosing will be necessary if you are using this reference with scaled-down multimedia projects. The authors do not do that for you.

The reader of this book will probably appreciate the liberal use of point form and graphics as much as I did. The layout is dynamic, and the reader is not bogged down in long streams of prose. Rather, the reader is permitted to gallop through the material, and graze on items of special interest. I suspect many project managers and instructional developers will find this a very useful reference as a result.

Among the many gems contained in this book, I really like the "Super Storyboard" form discussed in Chapter Seven and reproduced in Appendix B.

Anyone who has managed a multimedia development project realizes the need for having a single form to manage the various source media and displays which can come into play. A single sequence might include motion video, computer-generated graphic and textual overlays with a window from CD-ROM. Throw in two or three audio sources, and you have a storyboarding nightmare on your hands. This form goes a long way toward a solution. A better multimedia storyboard format may come along, but this is the best I've seen to date. The authors' permission to duplicate multiple copies for projects was also a nice touch.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

This book is a welcome and useful addition to the literature on interactive media design and development. It will be a particularly useful resource for project managers working in corporate settings or with clients, but most parts can also be used by managers of smaller projects. Instructional developers will also find this book useful. I recommend this book more for seasoned developers than beginners, but it could provide a very helpful structure for a course on multimedia design.

REVIEWER

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