This speaker will discuss the development and implementation of a new Multimedia Authoring Minor at her primarily undergraduate liberal arts university in the United States. Because the minor has been offered for a year now, she will also reflect on its successes and challenges and make recommendations for the future. This new interdisciplinary minor spans the disciplines of Professional Writing and Rhetoric, Digital Art, and Computer Science. It was designed to address the need for students to develop communication, design, and technology skills in the context of disciplinary content, and its goal is to give students the theoretical and practical experiences necessary to create interactive new media productions. This speaker will pay particular attention to what makes this new minor unusual: it brings together faculty from diverse disciplines to co-teach; it works from the assumption that writing, visual design, and computer science are becoming inextricably linked; and it emphasizes that creating new media productions requires authors to make a wide range of rhetorical decisions, not only in terms of content but in terms of technological decisions as well.

The speaker designed and teaches the Professional Writing and Rhetoric course, “Writing, Rhetoric, and Interface Design,” and therefore will discuss this course in greater detail. It provides students with the theoretical and practical background necessary to approach the design of interfaces from a user's perspective and as a reflective practice. The course emphasizes a process-oriented approach to design, wherein design includes rigorous and disciplined attention
to planning, research, revision, and production. Students learn to focus on design from a rhetorical perspective, one that balances writers' goals, users'/readers' needs, and text design possibilities. The Digital Art course gives students an introduction to the computer, software and related peripherals as tools that aid – and fundamentally alter – the process of creating artwork. Students learn the basic elements of visual language and design and become aware of the artistic possibilities of this emerging medium through contemporary digital art examples. The first computer science course gives students an overview of web development, management and installation from the server perspective, as well as exposure to XML, web services and a programming language. The second computer science course covers relational database design theory and, by the end of the course, students will have created a back end database for a web application.

The minor culminates in a studio course where students apply what they have learned by designing, creating, implementing, and testing a multimedia project for a real word need through a service learning client. Throughout the presentation, this speaker will share multiple examples of student-created new media projects from the various courses in the minor. In particular, she will highlight the parts of these projects that reflect attention paid to the role of new media in Professional Writing and Rhetoric, Digital Art, and Computer Science. This speaker will conclude with recommendations for revising this course in the future and suggestions for others seeking to design similar coursework at their own institutions. This speaker will draw upon activity theory and Bolter and Grusin’s concept of remediation in new media as a way to theorize the role new media may play in the curriculum of all three disciplines involved with the Multimedia Authoring Minor.