

Screencast Lab Report: Using ECU's MyWeb Server

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Using ECU's MyWeb Server: A Screencast

Instructional Need

When I made recent revisions to my website, I noticed the process for adding files to the server had changed and found myself having to spend a little longer reading the IT information to piece the steps together. When a classmate was struggling with creating his website, I realized that, while the steps themselves aren't very difficult, the directions provided by IT may be difficult for users who may have never used similar tools before or who may lack technological confidence. A screencast video is ideal for this sort of situation to help novices see and get comfortable with a process before, or while, doing it themselves. Then, when I told my classmates what I intended to create a screencast on, I received several comments indicating the topic would be helpful to them.

Learner Analysis

My target learner audience is students, staff, and faculty of ECU who want to publish their HTML websites on the university's server space and want to follow a video guide. Beyond the basic ability of being able to use a web browser and navigate between pages and moving files, learners will need to know how to create their own HTML files, and will need to know how to connect the VPN if they are off.

Materials & Resources Used

To create the screencast demonstration, I used the following tools.

- Microsoft Word, for project planning
- Adobe Dreamweaver, to build the site

- Google Chrome, for testing the site, reviewing IT documentation, and looking up information about the difference between using an FTP client and a network drive
- Panopto, for recording and editing the screencast, and editing the captions

At the same link where the screencast is located, there is also a companion tutorial that goes into more details about the process. This is a more polished presentation recorded using PowerPoint slides that feature screen shots, and bumper sounds from Adobe Audition Sound Effects.

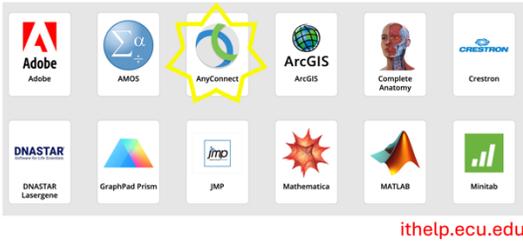
Design & Evaluation of Instruction

I initially opted to create a scripted screencast in PowerPoint for a few reasons, some better than others: I would be able to include more information about the process; I thought moving between several items on the screen may be too chaotic; I feared it would be difficult to keep the bookmarks bar on the browser I use and working files and folders I have on my desktop from view; and I worried that I would not be able to manage a script while engaged in the action. The scripted PowerPoint includes details about the process beyond the procedure itself, but does not demonstrate the motions of the procedure; it draws viewers to important details with visual effects. Images 1-4 display four of the slides: where to download the VPN client, where to create the web space, connecting to the server, and a review of the steps covered.

Images 1-4

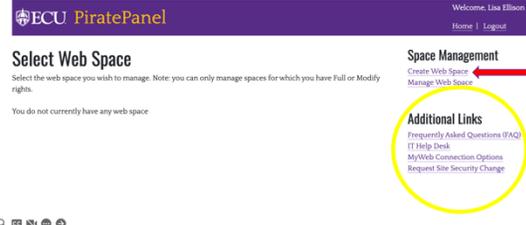
MyWeb screencast tutorial

Off-campus? Use the VPN download.ecu.edu →
AnyConnect tile

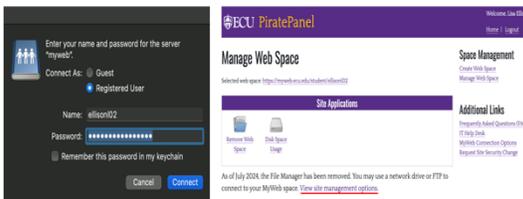


ithelp.ecu.edu

Create your webspace piratepanel.ecu.edu →
Create Web Space



Adding your files to your web space
macOS - `smb://myweb/students/yourPirateID`
Windows - `\\myweb\students\yourPirateID\`



To review

1. If you're off campus, log into the VPN
2. If you haven't created your webspace yet: create it at piratepanel.ecu.edu
3. Enter the network drive link in the browser address bar and log in to access your website files
macOS - `smb://myweb/students/yourPirateID`
Windows - `\\myweb\students\yourPirateID\`
4. Drag your files into the network drive
5. Check out your live website
<https://myweb.ecu.edu/students/yourPirateID> (students)
<https://myweb.ecu.edu/yourPirateID> (staff and faculty)

I then decided to create a screencast with a demonstration because of a remark from my instructor who had indicated such a screencast would help him but was left without the specific experience that would have most benefitted him. I also wanted to complete the walk-through demonstration because I wanted to overcome the challenges that had identified when I opted to create the scripted presentation. Table 1 identifies how I resolved the barriers I had identified to creating a demonstration video.

Table 1

Barriers and resolutions

Barriers to a demonstration video	Resolution
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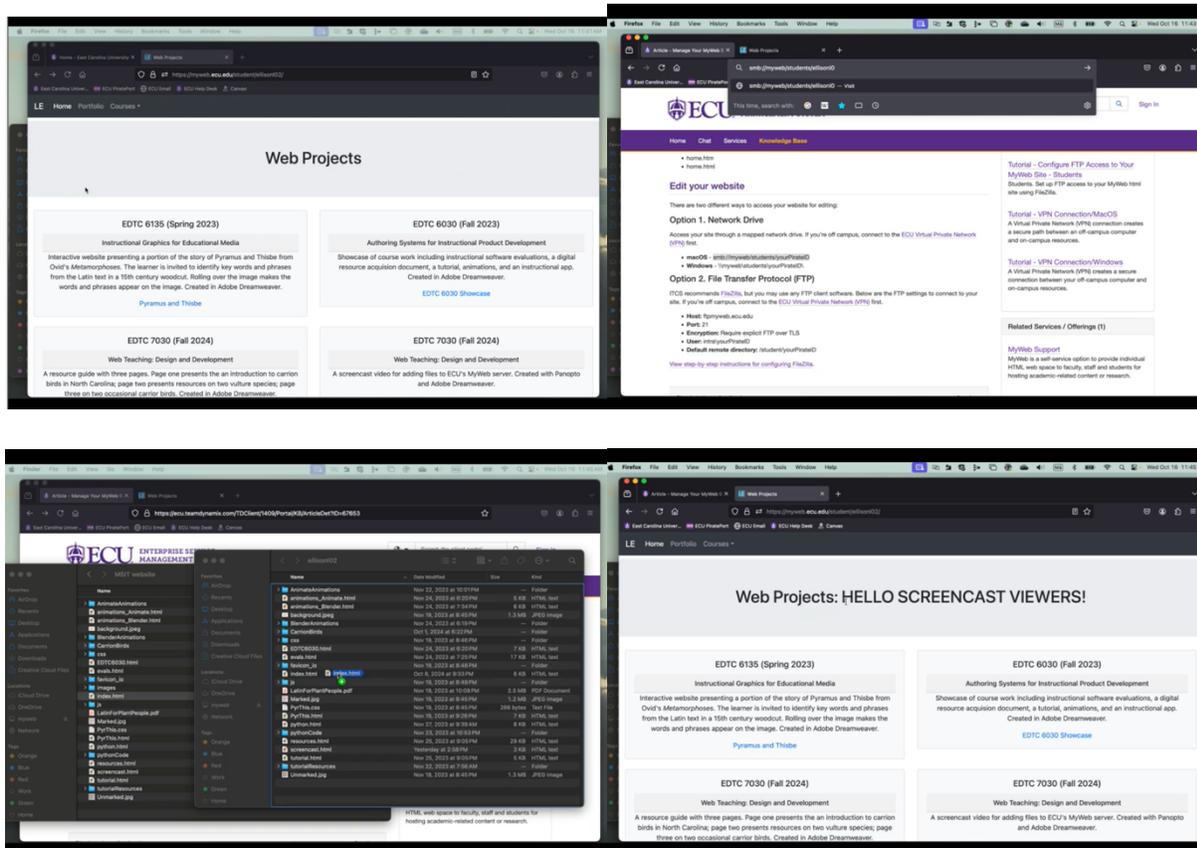
I would be able to include more information about the process in a tutorial.	Reimagining the purpose as demonstrating a specific part of the process, rather than an overview of the entire process.
I thought moving between several items on the screen may be too chaotic.	Identifying the necessary pages and screens to move through the process, and having them ready to reduce delays and opportunities for missteps.
I feared it would be difficult to keep the bookmarks bar on the browser I use and working files and folders I have on my desktop from view.	Realizing the second screen I use at work is clear of my desktop items, and a browser I do not use daily does not have my bookmarks would keep the free of clutter.
I worried that I would not be able to manage a script while engaged in the action.	Trusting that I would be able to talk through the process intellegibly without a script.

To create the demonstration screencast, I narrowed down the scope of the process considerably; I used a browser that is not my everyday one, and was able to use the desktop of a second screen to keep my active files and folders from cluttering the view. Since this screencast would not be scripted, I decided on a basic plan: begin at the website, go to the page for the server link, move the files, and refresh the website. Images

5-8 display screen shots from the demonstration screencast: my webpage before being updated, the ECU IT page with the link to the server and the necessary edit in the address bar, moving the file into the server, and the updated webpage.

Images 5-8

MyWeb screencast demonstration



Summative Evaluation

I found adding sound effects (footsteps approaching and footsteps receding) to the beginning and end of the first screencast easy enough. I chose not to add an image because I liked the aesthetic of the placeholder image while the sound of footsteps coming and going. One outside reviewer commented in private communication that the audio

effects sound was louder than the video sound, and that the sound on the demonstration video was low. It was not given as feedback, but I noticed the low volume on the demonstration screencast myself when another outside reviewer was watching the videos. The videos sound suitably loud and even on my computer, so this makes me concerned about not having the optimal audio settings and not having the ability to predict users' experience on my own device.

It is difficult to gauge the helpfulness of the webcasts based on the small sample size. I had two outside reviews from people who are not the target audience, neither of whom maintains or plans to maintain a website. Of three classmate reviewers, one intends to return to the website later when she begins to work on creating her website; one commended some choices I made, but did not indicate that the videos would have helped him resolve complications he had experienced with the process. The course instructor indicated that the demonstration video was helpful to him as a MyWeb user.

One classmate said, and I agree, that the tutorial video and the demonstration video are a nice pair that work well together. Learners are offered a look at the complete steps in the tutorial, and then can zoom-in on one part in the demonstration.

Concluding Comments

I have created screencasts, both scripted and unscripted, for the classes I teach for several years. I have not added bumpers to a video before; I found the process simple enough, though I need to learn more about assuring the volume of the added audio clip and the volume of the recordings are the same volume as each other and the volume that I expect them to be for learners, not requiring them to turn their volume to the highest setting

to hear it reasonably well. I edited the captions for these videos, which I have not done for most of the videos I have created (though I know that I should). I was pleased to find that process simple enough, and I intend to use it for videos I create from this point on.

Most importantly, having to precisely consider how a demonstration screencast would need to be different from a tutorial presentation helped me develop a keener sense for the screencast as an instructional genre. I will begin putting the insights I have gained to use immediately in my professional practice as I develop course materials for my current and future courses.

Link to screencasts

Both the tutorial and demonstration screencast can be found on my website at <https://myweb.ecu.edu/student/ellisonl02/screencast.html>.