HIST 161 Newscast Projects / 2012 Spring

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Materials

- Adobe Visual Communicator 3 (AVC)
- Green screen background
- Fluorescent softboxes (4)
- USB mic, Blue Yeti (base detached)
- Boom mic stand
- USB extension cable (>5m)
- Camcorder with Firewire port
- Firewire cable (>2m)
- Tripod with dolly
- LCD projector and screen
- External Hard Drive (E:)

Overview

1) Prepare AVC files (ideally, beforehand); use AVC's Pack and Go feature to save your project to a portable drive.
2) Set up SCS Studio (CK36) [SCS will do this]
    i) Green screen, lights and furniture
    ii) Computer and LCD projector
    iii) Camera, tripod and external drive
    iv) Microphone and boom stand
3) Copy AVC project (files) from your USB drive to the LaCie-100 Drive (E) connected to Studio PC, then eject your USB drive
4) Launch AVC, decline the wizard and open your MSH file from the E Drive
5) Adjust audio and video settings in AVC
6) Make a brief test recording to verify setup
7) Rehearse, adjust, save and repeat as necessary
8) Record program, then save
9) Publish as a high-quality WMV video to project folder on E Drive
10) Connect your USB drive and copy your WMV file from Drive E to your USB drive
11) Use File>Pack and Go to copy your project (your MSH file and all linked files) from the E Drive to your USB drive

Key Considerations & Advice

- Watch the brief demo video on Adobe's website for a general overview of the production process (https://www.adobe.com/products/visualcommunicator).
- Dress in layers; with 5-6 people in the Studio, it's going to get toasty!
- After each content or configuration change, use Ctrl-S to save your AVC file.
- Before you arrive at the SCS Studio, set-up your AVC file on an external flash drive or hard disk (with at least 2GB of available space); copy all your content files (still images, audio and video you plan to incorporate) to the same folder on that drive; import your content into the Action window in AVG; enter or paste your script into the teleprompter area in AVC; and use **File> Pack and Go** to save your file. If you do this ahead of time, you can dedicate your Studio reservation to rehearsing and recording at a more relaxed pace.
- To work on your own (Windows) computer, you can download and install a free 30-day trial from the Adobe website. You will also find Adobe Visual Communicator (AVC) on the Windows computers in the SCS Lab (CK 35). However, we have only one license for the lab and one for the Studio; so only 2 groups can work with it at the same time.

- If you are planning to incorporate a video clip into your production, the format must be AVI, MPEG or MOV. If you need to convert your clip to one of these formats, consider using Freemake Video Converter (http://www.freemake.com/free_video_converter); you can install it for free on your own Windows computer or use it in the SCS Lab. Keep in mind that locating and converting videos can be surprisingly time consuming. Make sure you do this before your Studio appointment.
- If you grab a video clip from YouTube, save it in MPEG4 format rather then H.264 (if you do this in the Studio, we can help). H.264 clips have proven to be unstable in AVC.
- Consider using a web-based teleprompter—such as cueprompter.com or easyprompter.com—to ***practice*** reading your script. When you record, you will use the teleprompter built into AVC; but in practice, these web-based tools can help you become more comfortable with reading from a teleprompter without ***looking*** like you're reading from a teleprompter. Think about what you might say or do to fill time should you get too far ahead of the script.
- AVC will display your script in lines of 25-30 characters, by default. If you create your script in a word processor, consider setting wide margins to mimick AVC and show your text in 25-30 character lines. Consider breaking your lines at punctuation marks, where the anchor might naturally pause.
- Consider adding your script to the teleprompter, determining the desired scroll speed, and adding all necessary line breaks and spaces BEFORE adjusting the positions of the action trays. Last minute changes to the script can necessitate many time-consuming action adjustments. Also, make sure that the anchors are involved with configuring the script, since ultimately it is their comfort level that will determine the best settings.
- The amount of disc space required for a 20-minute AVC production will vary depending on your content. But even the most basic project will likely require 800MB for the production files and 50MB for the published WMV video. In theory, this will fit on your H drive (i.e., your network storage space), but that won't leave you with much "breathing room." Thus, we recommend that you use an external USB flash or hard drive with at least 2GB of available space.
- An SCS staff member will be standing by during your Studio session to advise and instruct as needed; however, SCS cannot do any of the work…after all, this *is* a graded assignment.
- It is crucial that your talent (i.e., those who will be on camera) not wear green or white clothing or accessories; otherwise, you will find it nearly impossible to achieve a realistic green screen effect.

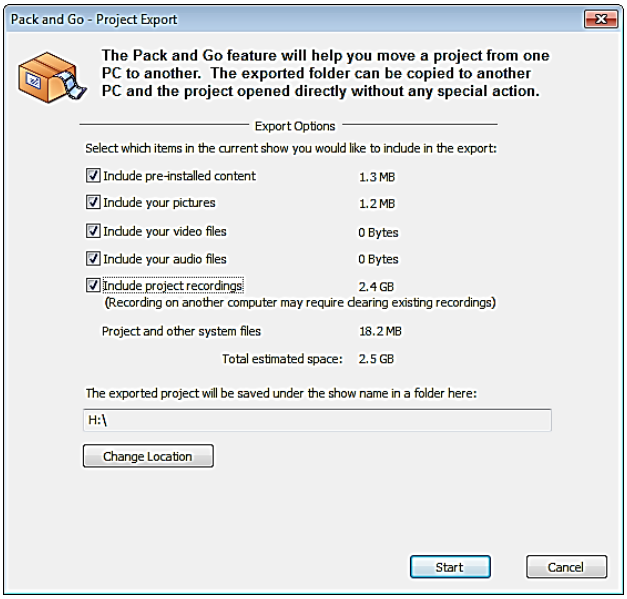
Prepare AVC Files

Although your time in the SCS Studio will be limited, there is much you can do outside the Studio either in the SCS Lab (CK35) or on your own Windows computer using the free trial version of AVC. SCS currently manages two AVC licenses: one of the licenses is dedicated to the SCS Studio, the other can be accessed on any of the Windows PCs in the SCS Lab, BUT only on one computer at any given time. Your professor has already reserved the Studio for your actual recording time. You may make additional Studio reservations by calling (410-704-5151), emailing (scs@towson.edu) or visiting (CK 35) SCS.

We suggest that you begin your AVC production as follows:

1) Secure a USB flash drive or external USB hard drive with at least 2GB of available space.
2) Create a project folder on that drive and give it a name such as AVC-HIST161.
3) Place in that folder any graphic, video or audio files you plan to use. Video files must be AVI, MPEG or MOV; if conversion is necessary, consider *Freemake Video Converter* (www.freemake.com). When converting video, avoid the H.264 compression method; it is not entirely compatible with AVC 3.
4) Connect your USB drive and launch AVC.
5) Select **Save As** from the **File** menu and save your AVC file with a unique name--do not use the default name "Show_1".
6) Add your script to the teleprompter, determine the best scroll speed (we suggest starting at 2), and adjust line breaks and spacing to anchorperson's preference.
7) Add and position actions to continue building your production.
8) Select **Pack and go…** from the **File** pull-down menu select all content EXCEPT* project recordings (pictured on right), change the location to your external drive if necessary, and click **Start**.

   *You will later use Pack and Go to copy your project from the Studio E Drive to your USB drive. During ***that*** operation, you will want to select **Include project recordings**.



9) You should be able to connect this drive to any computer with AVC and open your MSH file to continue developing your project and to record your final video.

Set Up the SCS Studio

For HIST161 students, SCS staff will set up the Studio and check the equipment before you arrive. Nevertheless, the setup procedure is listed below for your reference. (SCS Staff: If there are contractors working near the Studio, let a professional staff member know, so that we can "negotiate peace.")

How to setup the green screen and lighting

1. Remove any non-essential items from the stage and reveal the green screen; do not extend the runner, it is unnecessary in this case
2. Smooth creases from the green screen as much as possible
3. Place the table about 12 feet in front of the screen
4. Place the first set of lights about 6 feet away from the screen and 4 feet up from the floor and focus them directly on the green screen; even illumination with no shadows will yield the best results
5. Place the second set of lights approximately 14 feet from the screen and set them to light the talent.

How to setup the camera and the tripod

1. Securely mount the camera to the tripod head.
2. Attach the AC adapter to the camera and the power strip.
3. Plug the small end of the Firewire cable into the camera's DV port (try to drape the cable in a way to reduce strain of this port); plug the other end into the Firewire extension cable coiled beside the computer case. Keep the power and data cables seperated to avoid interference.
4. Make sure the camera focus (physical switch) is set to Auto.
5. Remove the lens cap, power on the camera, and set it to video mode (as opposed to photo mode).
6. Use a paper clip to depress the Reset button and restore the camera defaults.
7. Position the tripod near the center of the room and lock the dolly wheels to prevent it from moving.
8. Frame the shot as wide as possible, but make sure the frame (as displayed in the AVC monitor wndow) is completely filled by the green screen.

How to set up and configure the USB boom microphone

1. Position the boom stand on the right side of the tripod. Make sure that it does not cast a shadow on the talent or the green screen and that it does not obstruct the talent's view of the projection screen.
2. Securely mount the Blue Yeti USB microphone on the end of the boom pole, and connect the small end of its USB cable to the microphone. Connect the other end of the mic cable to the USB extension cable and run that back to a USB port on the computer. Be sure to wrap or clip the cables to the boom pole and stand so that they do not hang down and cast shadows.
3. Power on the microphone and adjust the boom stand so that the mic is in front of and above the table, <u>just out of frame</u>.
4. Set the mic's Pattern (knob) to Cardioid (image on right).
5. In the Windows Control Panel, make sure that the Yeti Mic **IS NOT** selected as the audio output device.



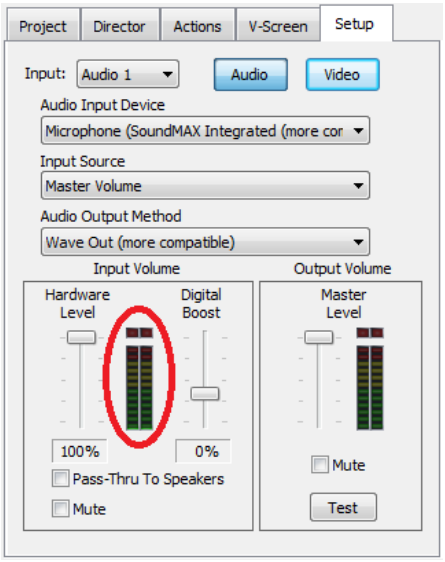
Configure Adobe Visual Communicator (AVC)

SCS Staff will be available to help, but the settings from here on may be unique to your project; so this is where *you* take over again.

1. Log onto the Windows computer in the SCS Studio and **disable the screensaver**.
2. Connect your external drive to the Windows computer and copy your project folder to the E Drive (LaCie-100). (You may be tempted to skip this step and work *directly* from your USB drive; if you do so, audio and video problems are more likely and much longer publishing times are guaranteed.)
3. Eject and disconnect your USB drive.
4. Launch AVC.
5. Select **Open** from the **File** menu, navigate to your project folder on Drive E, and double-click the MSH file you created beforehand.

Set AVC's performance setting to ensure stability

6. Select **Performance Settings** from the **Settings** menu.
7. Set the **Your computer is?** value to **Fast** and click OK.
8. Save your file.



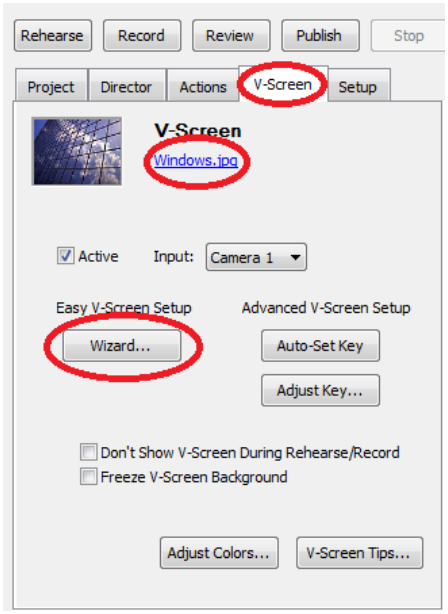
Configure your audio input

9. On the left, click on the **Setup** tab, then the **Audio** button. Make sure the Audio Input Device is set to **Yeti Stereo Microphone**.
10. Have another person sit in frame at the table and speak to check the mic level. The indicator lights in the Input Volume area should regularly rise into the yellow (mid) range, but rarely into the red (high) range. If necessary, lower the Hardware Level slider to adjust the sensitivity of the mic; or turn the **Gain** knob on the mic body.
11. Save your file.

Configure your video input

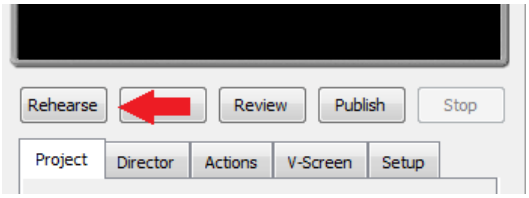
12. On the **Setup** tab, click the **Video** button. Make sure the Current Video Input Device is set to **Microsoft DV camera**. You should see a live feed of the green screen in the AVC monitor. If there is no video, verify that the camera is powered on, connected via the Firewire cable and set to video mode. Also, make sure the lens cap is removed.
13. Set the Capture Frame Rate to 29.97 or 30.
14. Save your file.

Configure the AVC V-Screen (green screen) feature



15. Click on the **V-Screen** tab and select the **Active** checkbox.
16. Turn on the projector, position your talent in frame and turn off the overhead lights.
17. Find the background image you wish to use—you can use image files from the AVC library or access your external drive from the file browser at the bottom of the screen—and drag and drop it on the image thumbnail in the V-Screen control panel.
18. Click the **Wizard** button and follow the on-screen directions to fine tune the green screen (chromakey) effect for your background and talent.
19. Deselect the "Don't show V-screen…" and "Freeze V-Screen Background" checkboxes
20. Save your file.

Setup the teleprompter and rehearse



21. Click the **Director** tab and set the Scroll Speed to **2** or **3**.
22. If necessary, paste or type your script into the teleprompter window. (Ideally, you will have done this before your Studio session.)
23. Click the **Rehearse** button to start the scrolling. Your talent will be reading the text as it passes through the red zone at the top of the teleprompter window. If the speed **within** the red zone is comfortable, but the text is **approaching** the red zone too fast, add extra blank lines (and, consequently, time) between phrases.

Add graphic, audio and video content

24. Navigate to your desired content (graphic, audio and video) in the File Browser area, and drag and drop content into the Action window. Drag and drop items (called Action trays) in the Action widow to adjust timing; time is indicated by the scale on the left edge of the Action window.

    NOTE: Ideally, you will have already added your content to the Action window and adjusted the timing before arriving for your recording session. Before recording, you should need only to rehearse and fine tune the pace and the content positioning.

25. Use the **Rehearse** button to determine whether additional adjustments are necessary.

Record your video

26. Make sure your talent is in position. If two anchors are to be in frame, make sure they are close enough to each other that you don't have to zoom out and risk scarring your green screen effect. For a more natural performance, consider coaching the non-speaking anchor to react subtly to the speaking anchor.
27. Move the AVC window on the Windows desktop so that the teleprompter red zone on the projector screen is just above the camera from the talent's perspective. In this way, the talent will be able to look directly at the camera while reading the script.
28. Click **Record** to begin recording.

    We recommend that your **do not** pan and zoom during recording. If you pan too far left or right or zoom too far out, you will ruin the green screen effect.

    AVC does not allow you to pause the recording. Think of this as a live braodcast; if you make a mistake, just correct it as gracefully as possible and continue. You can certainly stop recording and start over, but the duration of your Studio time will not allow you do this repeatedly.

    It is possible to edit the final video with an editor such as Windows Live Movie Maker; but, again, you are unlikely to have time to do this during your Studio reservation.

29. When finished, click **Done.**
30. Verify the recording by clicking **Review**.
31. Save your file.

Publish your video

32. Click the **Publish** button, select **Save video to a hard drive or network** and click **Next**.
33. Select **Publish as a Windows Media video (.wmv)**, click Browse and select your USB drive as the destination, and click **Next**. (If time allows or on a subsequent visit, you can publish in other formats and sizes as well.)
34. Select **Large File Size / Better Quality** and click **Next**.
35. Click **Finish** and wait.
36. Verify that your WMV video file is located on your USB Drive.
37. Use **File> Pack and Go** to copy your project folder back to your USB drive in case you need it later.