

To: Mr. Cole Campese and Dr. Stuart Selber
From: Erica Hollis
Subject: Report on Use of the iPad in English 202C
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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to describe my experiences with the iPad this semester as they relate to schoolwork, especially regarding the English 202C Technical Writing course. I will describe several of the applications, or apps, detailing how they are helpful, convenient, easy to use, hard to use, and/or detrimental. In particular, I will describe Pages, iAnnotate, the iPad mail app, iBooks, and Blog Press.

Summary

I have had an overall pleasant experience with the iPad. My first reaction was excitement. Now it feels like a daily part of my life. I use it for checking email, news, inserting events into the calendar, listening to music, watching movies, as well as the tools used for the English 202C class. The iPad is a very light, portable device that can be an effective tool for writing, reading, and editing. iBooks and iAnnotate are very well designed to suit their purpose. The iPad mail app and Pages, though, have some drawbacks.

Writing in Pages

I have used Pages to write several assignments for the English 202C course, including a rhetorical analysis, an internet resource guide, two resumes, two cover letters, and blog posts. I have found that using Pages is manageable, but overall not as comfortable as using a computer. Given the choice, I would prefer to use a computer, but I have tried to use Pages as much as possible. Having used a computer nearly all my life, it feels natural. A goal I had during this semester was to find out if getting enough experience using Pages on the iPad would make it feel comparable to using a computer. I did not get to that point, but I definitely feel more comfortable using it now than I did at first.

One of the biggest drawbacks I have found when using Pages is not having a mouse. Using my finger to move the cursor around can be very frustrating and time consuming because the cursor rarely goes to the exact spot I want. The external keyboard helps with this problem, though. I can use my finger to move the cursor to the general area, and then use the arrow keys to move it to the exact location. I still found myself wishing I had a mouse, probably because I am so used to using one. I do believe that with more experience using the iPad for writing, I would feel increasingly more comfortable with it. I noticed that after writing one of my assignments for an extended period of time, I would get so used to the touch screen that when I went to use my laptop I would try to touch the screen instead of using the mouse.

Styling documents using Pages in the iPad is quite convenient. Compared to Microsoft Word, it may even be easier, although Word has many more features. For example, adding borders to the internet resource guide was easy to add using my finger. But

using Microsoft Word's extra features was very convenient when writing the instruction set, which required a lot of styling.

Editing in iAnnotate

The iAnnotate application for the iPad is a very useful, convenient tool. I have never used a computer of any kind to edit documents before; I've always done it by hand. Using iAnnotate is more effective in many ways than editing by hand. The tool I used the most was the highlighter. The highlighter allows one to highlight a word or phrase in yellow and then write a remark in a box that pops up. The box can then be minimized so that it does not interfere with the ability to read the document. Editing by hand can look messy. I have often had to squeeze remarks into an edge of a paper. I have been so impressed with iAnnotate that in the future, even if I'm not using Pages but using Microsoft Word instead, I plan use computers to edit documents whenever possible. I would recommend the iAnnotate application to anyone using an iPad who edits documents frequently, such as a student or professional writing a research paper with others.

The iPad Internet and Mail App

The iPad is convenient for on the go internet browsing. It is lightweight and therefore extremely portable. It turns on almost immediately, which is very convenient. There are a few downsides, though. Most web pages are compatible, but some, such as Angel, are not. Angel is a course management system used by Penn State. I tried to look at PDF homework directions which were embedded in Angel, and could not scroll down to see the whole page.

Furthermore, in my experience the Wi-Fi signal in the iPad is weak. I've tried to use the iPad in classes to follow along with lectures or look things up related to the lecture, but often have trouble getting a signal. Other students on laptops do not have this problem. As far as a workplace environment is concerned, many offices do not use wireless internet. Other apps could be used in a workplace environment, but many apps require internet access.

I use Hotmail for email. I use this for the 'mail' icon at the bottom of the iPad. The 'mail' icon is an app that allows you to sync your email account to the format of this app. The format is laid out with a main screen to view emails and a left hand bar that allows scrolling through emails.

I am disappointed with app because when I delete email on the iPad, it only gets deleted on the iPad mail app, not anywhere else. Also, you cannot access your contact list or folders besides inbox, drafts, sent or trash.

The iBooks App

I have some bias regarding the iBooks application because I prefer to read paper books over electronic ones. When I received the iPad the first thing I did was download free books. But I haven't read much of them. I just don't like the feeling of reading books on a screen.

Not having had much prior experience with reading books electronically, I like the way iBooks is designed. I like the realistic effects when turning pages. It is easy to get to the desired chapter from the table of contents. Also, the app has useful features such as a built-in dictionary and bookmarks. The only problem I have had with the app is that the graphics in the book used in the class were sometimes blurry and hard to read, but this is a problem specific to the book and not the app itself.

Conclusion

Using the iPad in the English 202C course has opened my eyes to new tools and media that are available in today's technological environment. While I have heard other students criticizing using the iPad as a writing tool, I have not had an overall negative experience. I have found that, after getting used to it, using the writing, editing, and reading applications in the class has been an interesting, new experience with only a few minor drawbacks.

Recommendations

I believe that the iPad can be a very useful tool in the school or work environment. I do not know how commonplace it is in such environments, and will be interested to see in my future how the iPad is integrated into my workplace. I believe that using the iPad in the English 202C course is an effective way to gather research on this new technology, because the course was laid out very well, especially the blog posts to critique and analyze the iPad.