Case Study No. 3
Creating e-learning objects in-house with tutorial authoring tools

How did we choose Articulate Storyline?

Ideally, we wanted any member of the teaching and learning team to be able to create a tutorial, without programming skills or needing to outsource work to learning technologies staff. We therefore investigated a range of tutorial authoring tools with the following specifications in mind:

- User-friendly interface, intuitive to use
- Allows a combination of formats (slides, screencasts, quizzes) within a single tutorial
- Potential to adapting existing materials
- Allows for flexible design and navigation (a move away from restrictive templates)

Articulate promote Storyline as e-learning authoring software that is simple enough for beginners to create polished interactive courses. Following a trial period and comparison with similar tools (e.g. Adobe Captivate, Xerte) we purchased a 5 license bundle in partnership with IT Services.

Tips for choosing a tool:
1. Where you will host your tutorials – is the software compatible with your CMS/VLE? Test it.
2. What is your budget, if anything?
3. Who will be using the software and what are their technical skills?
4. Who will be using the outputs? Will the style of the software appeal to them?

E-learning lessons learned from using Articulate Storyline:

1 Software will not solve all of your problems
The interface in Articulate is very similar to PowerPoint, so new users tend to find it familiar and intuitive to use. However, easy to use software does not mean it will be easy to create a functional and attractive learning experience. It’s important to be aware of this and manage your expectations accordingly.

2 Strike a balance between content delivery and activities
Don’t feel that creating an “interactive” tutorial means every slide has to be accompanied by a task or quiz question. In fact, if your learners are simply trying to access information or advice quickly, these elements may become tedious. What Storyline allows you to do in this case, is to break down and structure the content through use of triggers, layers and callouts, allowing the learner to choose the information they wish to access and digest it in bite size chunks – this in itself is an “interaction.”
3 Create a style template for your learning object and stick to it
In order to navigate content successfully, users need to be able to discern easily between headings and body text; information and activities; and clickable and non-clickable elements. Formatting options, positioning and icons will help you to establish this visual language. Crucially, once you’ve started a particular style and layout, don’t be tempted to change it part way through a tutorial (for example to squeeze more on a particular slide). If your menu button suddenly jumps from the bottom right corner to middle top, this is very jarring for the learner.

4 Navigation is everything
Making conscious navigation choices is very important. Tools like Articulate enable you to create user-driven navigation to give an element of choice in your project. However, you need to think carefully about when this is appropriate. If you are creating a “lesson” style tutorial, some sections may build upon understanding acquired in earlier stages; you need to be careful not to allow users to skip ahead to content they’ll find inaccessible. If however, you’re creating a reference guide which students will return to frequently, you need to make every section of the learning object quickly and easily accessible from the landing screen so they’re not frustrated.

Tips for getting started with Articulate Storyline:
- Learn to use layers and triggers first, they’re invaluable
- Don’t restrict yourself to using the pre-set “buttons” as buttons: any image, text box or shape can be a button once you’ve assigned a trigger to it
- Label all slides, buttons and layers carefully, you’ll be glad of this when you start to add triggers

Useful links:

Example tutorial from the University of Warwick Library:
http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/using/getmore/go-further-tutorial

Articulate Storyline website (including trial download):

E-learning Heroes (Storyline training materials):