



LANGUAGE LEARNING

Profiles



SOFTWARE
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SOLUTIONS

Exclusive Licensor of Sony Language Learning Software

VIDEO SIGN LANGUAGE LAB DELIVERS NEW POSSIBILITIES AT MADONNA UNIVERSITY

Interactive video technology enhances sign language studies.

With the implementation of the Sony Virtuoso™ and Soloist® American Sign Language (ASL) digital language lab, the sign language studies (SLS) department at Madonna University in Livonia, Michigan has taken teaching to a new level.

The Sony Virtuoso Instructional Control Software for ASL, when coupled with Sony Soloist® Digital Comparative Recorder Software ASL module, is an all-digital, multi-media, software-based language learning system that works within the framework of the school's PC network. Integrating quality video cameras at the instructor position as well at each student position enhances sign language studies by enabling the instructor and students to easily interact and communicate visually.

The Sign Language Studies Program at Madonna.

Established as a four-year undergraduate degree program in 1975, the Madonna University Sign Language Studies program consists of two majors: a comprehensive major in Sign Language Studies and a more advanced program in American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreting. Regarded as the one of pre-eminent ASL baccalaureate programs in the Midwest, Madonna University enrolls 250-300 students each semester in ASL classes, and typically over 100 pursue the four-year degree. One of the distinguishing features of the University's SLS program is its complementarity with other service-related majors; for instance, students can double major in SLS and such fields as nursing, social work, criminal justice, gerontology, and education. This provides these students the opportunity to use Sign language as a mode of communication with special populations of clients. Class size ranges from five to twenty students, with an average class size of twelve. This provides an ideal personalized teaching and learning environment.



MADONNA
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Using technology to document progress and proficiency.

Utilizing the Sony Virtuoso Digital Language Learning System is consistent with the goals and history of the Sign Language Studies department, which has worked since its inception to provide Sign Studies majors with learning technology to assist them as they develop ASL proficiency. The Sony Virtuoso and Sony Soloist software is helping Madonna University achieve its goal of creating digitized portfolios for graduating SLS students. In the digital portfolio students document their language development from introductory, through intermediate, and, ultimately, to advanced levels. In the lab students can save their best work digitally – demonstration of their sign language skills, resumé, term papers, and related language documents for distribution to prospective employers and graduate schools.

Developing skills through instructor feedback, peer review, and self-evaluation.



Instructors at Madonna use the real-time audio and video communication to review students' work on the spot and provide immediate feedback, facilitating an open dialogue with their students. The real-time communication is also a great tool for students working in pairs or groups on selected activities. They build upon each individual's strengths and are able to peer correct as they work through activities.

Working individually, students are utilizing the comparative recording feature to record a signed activity and then playback both the stimulus and their recording to self-correct any mistakes.

Instructors creatively use the digital tools.

Built into the Sony Soloist Digital Comparative Recorder Software is a set of authoring tools, which opens up a whole range of possibilities for creating real-world activities. The SLS teaching staff has begun taking advantage of this multimedia "toolbox" to create their own ASL course materials. Once developed, the materials are stored on local servers so they can be easily accessed and shared by everyone. Madonna's goal is to collaborate with sign language programs at other institutions using the Sony technology to explore ideas and build an evolving repository of quality multimedia materials for sharing.

The bottom line.

"The Sony Virtuoso ASL technology is a hit with everyone on campus," stated Dan McDougall, Chair, Sign Languages Studies. "Students appreciate that the lab helps them identify areas for improvement, while instructors are thrilled to have new tools for teaching and assessment. We find that we can incorporate the Sony Virtuoso ASL software in every part of our curriculum."



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SANS Inc.
10 White Wood Lane
North Branford, CT 06471

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