

# **iTOUR: HOW WE FIT SIX FLOORS OF MILNER LIBRARY INTO THE PALM OF YOUR HAND**

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## **WHAT IS iTour?**

Illinois State University's (ISU) Milner Library broke new ground in January 2008 with iTour, a tour of the library that uses Apple's 5<sup>th</sup> generation iPod. iTour is a blend of video, audio, and user-selected choices that launched a new age of Information Literacy delivery at ISU. When the student starts iTour, it walks them through a full tour of Milner, letting them determine what to explore at their own pace. iTour is programmed to be interactive, allowing the user to determine the direction and depth of knowledge on a variety of sources and services at Milner. We chose iPods for iTour because it freed the students from sitting at a computer, watching an online video. Now the students physically move around in Milner, engaging with both the physical building, and the "iLibrarian" with a technology that is known and utilized by thousands of their peers every day. In addition, iTour can be checked out from whenever the library is open, so the tours can be utilized by users that may have other competing time constraints.

## **HOW WE DID THIS**

Every iPod since the third generation series has been able to play videos, audio and display text (Page, 2007). There is an often unrecognized and little used iPod feature called Notes. By using a text editor, you can create notes, like a grocery list, that can be uploaded to an iPod. For iTour, we used this as the driving engine for iTour. The Notes feature does not limit you to just text, you can utilize simple HTML programming tags to create links to other text, audio and video sources to create an iPod-based video tour of your own. To actually create the video footage, while Milner Library hired a video production company to make our iTour videos, it is not a necessity. You can do this with any camera that produces a MPEG4 video, or you could also use still digital photos. You could either create little video vignettes utilizing such programs as Windows Movie Maker or iMovie, or just create

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audio files, and add your digital photos as artwork. However, the easiest way to understand how to create an iTour-like system in your library would be to follow our process at Milner Library.

## **THE IDEA**

The first step in any project is the idea. iTour was the child of the need to redesign our online library tutorial. We were looking at creating a new web tutorial that actually "walked" the student through the library, with the aid of videos and a map. The tutorial was to have taken the student virtually through all six floors, point out areas of interest throughout the tour. iTour took that sit-down tour, and made it mobile for the user. However, your idea does not have to be just a tour. iTour-like systems could guide a student through searching a database or as a pathfinder for reference resources. If you think of how often you show a student how to do something, that could be a candidate for an iTour program.

## **THE SCRIPT, PART ONE**

Now that you have determined what you want to create, the next step is the script. I cannot overemphasize its importance. Nothing spells disaster on a video shoot than not having a script. The script will set out your ideas and information you want to convey, and will arrange them in a logical manner. The brainstorming portion of the project is the time when everyone could be involved. Putting ideas on the board, and getting them into a coherent arrangement is the first step towards a successful script.

The next step is writing the script, and this is when you leave the committee behind. Have one person write the script. If you leave this up to a committee, your horse will become a camel in an instant. One writer will ensure that you have a consistency of voice, and of delivery. Later, after the first draft is done, you can have everyone read it over and offer corrections and possible revisions.

When writing your script you will want to keep in mind your audience. You will need to write in a voice that matches your listeners. Always keep in mind that you are writing to a student, and not to a librarian. To a student, it is a book, not a monograph; it is “that film stuff”, not a microfilm; it is a database, not an electronic resource. If in doubt, ask a student at random to read what you have written, and see if they understand. Also be aware that when writing the script, focus on the words, and the story, and leave the visuals to later. In other words, don’t write the script around the visuals but vice versa. If you spend the time focusing on what you want to say, the visuals will follow naturally.

## THE SCRIPT, PART TWO

Now that your script is written and revised to the point you like it, you can start thinking of what you want to show. A good rule of thumb is this: start simple and keep it simple. Also keep in mind that the screen is only 2 ½ inches wide. Only show on the screen what you are talking about. If the script is talking about a computer, you need to show one. However, do not fall into the trap of showing everything scripted. Quick cuts and fast camera movements could be disorienting when watched on an iPod. Also, do not expect someone to read more than is absolutely necessary on such a small screen.

When we created iTour, we hired a production company to do the script polishing, the video shoot, and the editing of the video vignettes that you see in iTour. While this is a fantastic way to eliminate the stress of doing a project like this on your own, it does cost you money. iTour could have been done using off-the-shelf software. Even with hiring a production company, part of the iTour was done ourselves using Garage Band and iMovie from Apple, to create test videos while the videos were being produced. Digital photos also could be used instead of videos, and this would be a quick and cost effective way to create a similar project. You could also add these digital photos to a podcasting program; add your own audio, then export the file out in a MPEG4 format. Or you could just import audio files into iTunes, and add the digital photo as the album artwork.

## THE VIDEO SHOOT

The most important thing to keep in mind when doing your video shoot is that it will take a lot of your time. The rule of thumb in the video industry is that for every minute of finished video, you will shoot ten minutes of footage. When our videos were shot, it took them two and a half days to shoot in the library, or about 22 hours. Depending on your project complexity, this rule of thumb could be adjusted either up or down. However, remember that it will take some time, so plan for it.

If you are a novice to video production, I would highly recommend consulting books on the subject. The Library of Congress subject heading of Video recordings --Production and direction can provide a wealth of information on such things as composition, sound and lighting for the beginner.

Finally, you may want to check with your institution concerning the policy of shooting on site, and the need for a model release. Everyone person owns the right to their own image, and that person will have to give you permission to use their image. That is what a model release does. However, more and more institutions are having students and employees release their image rights when they become part of the community, which is the case at Illinois State University. In any case, it is best to inquire about this before you start shooting. Trying to find students that appear in your video after it has been shot can become nightmarish for all involved.

## THE NOTES PROGRAMMING

To get the videos to play in order, you may fear a need for some scary HTML programming, best suited for an IT professional. In reality, all it takes is a text editor program like Word Pad or Text Editor, and a little HTML programming skill. The notes are just text files, and if you feel comfortable in creating anchor tag like those below, you can create an iTour program.

```
<A HREF="An iTour Note">Click Here to Learn More. </A>
```

```
<A HREF="video=An iTour Video"> Click here to see how iTour works. </A>
```

Before you start any project like this, I would highly recommend that you download the *iPod Notes Feature Guide* from the Apple website (Apple, Inc., 2007). It has a wealth of information on video formats that you can use: how to link to a photo, a song, a group of songs or a video; locking the iPod to play only your program; changing the titles that appear at the top of the screen; and a very nice section on how to formulate your iPod based program. While there is a myriad of possibilities that you can utilize with the Notes function, iTour primarily used only two of the programming features: the two anchor tags that were shown above. Figure 1 shows what a note will look like when you create it.

Figure 1

```
Welcome to iTour. If this is the first time you've ever used an iPod, click on <A HREF="VIDEO=1A">the center wheel now. </A> Otherwise, to skip the orientation to an iPod, using the click wheel to navigate to<A HREF="INTRODUCTION.TXT"> here and click </A>the center button.
```

In this figure, you can see how we used both of the tags to give the user some control over what videos to watch and where to go. We designed each of the menus to start off with the overview video as the first link. This way, if the user just clicked on the center button, at least this video would play. In other notes, videos that further explain a service or resource are listed further down in the text. All a patron has to do is to navigate to these links

is to move their finger around the center click wheel, and press the center button. The last link in this figure is a link to a new note, and a new set of videos to explore. Figure 2 show how the page will look like on the iPod.

**Figure 2**

Welcome to iTour. If this is the first time you've ever used an iPod, click on [the center wheel now](#). Otherwise, to skip the orientation to an iPod, using the click wheel to navigate to [here and click the center button](#).

Lastly, you will need to create a Preference.txt file. In this file you will want to include the following:

```
<meta name="NotesOnly" content="true">
```

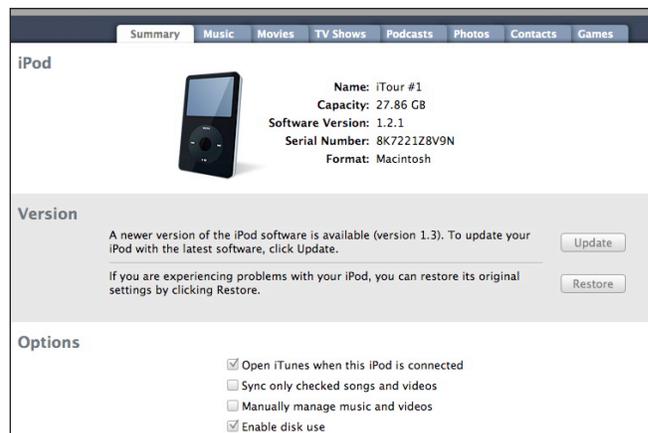
This command in the Preference.txt file will force the iPod to only play the notes. It is referred to in the *iPod Notes Feature Guide* as the Museum Mode. Basically, when this file executes in the iPods, they will only play iTour, and nothing else. You must include the quotation marks enclosing the name and the setting as shown, with no spaces. Preference tags are not case sensitive, but it's a good idea to keep them consistent within your files. To set a preference so that it is global to your presentation, add a file named Preferences.txt to the Notes folder. A global preference setting is in effect unless it is overridden by a local preference setting.

## BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

iTunes is the basis for hosting the video files, transferring those files to the iPods, and getting the programming notes into the iPod for iTour to work. iTunes is free at the Apple website, and there are versions for both Mac and PC (Apple, Inc., 2008). Once iTunes is installed, and you have hooked up your iPod, you will need to change the iPod to function as an external hard drive (Figure 3). To do this, just check the box that says "enable this iPod for disk use" in iTunes. The difference now is one that the iPod now appears on your desktop as an external hard drive. Because of this, you will have to manually eject the iPod in order to remove them.

After that, all you have to do is add the video or audio files by dragging the files from the desktop or folder to the iTunes program, and the program will do the rest. The format of the video files is in an MPEG4 format. While there is a file format especially for iTunes program, which you can use, the downside is that you have to have iTunes installed to watch them. In an MPEG4 format, you can watch the videos in virtually all desktop video players, such as Quicktime and Real Player.

**Figure 3**



Next, you will want to open the iPod on the desk top, and drag all your notes over to the notes folder, making sure that you take the Preference.txt files with you. Sync the iPod with iTunes, and your presentation is ready to play.

## A FEW THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- *You can only load 1,000 notes, each with about 1,000 words.* For iTour, we only created slight over 40 notes, and the tour runs about 41 minutes in length. Needless to say, with this limitation, you will be hard pressed to exceed that amount for any project.
- *It helps to have a visual aid.* Depending on the complexity of the project, you can easily lose sight of where you're going and where you need to be. I found that a visual aid helps in both the programming of iTour, and in the script writing. For iTour, it was my office wall, index cards and painter's tape.
- *Beware of Smart Quotes.* You may be tempted to create the notes in a word processing program like MS Word, but if you do, make sure that you turn off the Smart Quotes function. Especially in MS Word, they do not correct themselves when you save them as .txt files.
- *Give real names to your files.* Give your video files names that describe their contents. Given the complexity of the project, the file names like "video 3" are not going to tell you much when you're deep into the programming.

## THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS

While Milner Library created iTour, it does not mean that the Notes for an iPod can only do a tour of your library. With a little thought, a lot of planning, and a good dose of the creative spirit, one can envision endless possibilities, such as an art gallery tour, or a "Choose Your Own Adventure" type project, or a guided garden walk. All that is stopping you is the time, the effort, and a

good supply of iPods.

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