

NEWS

Schools Put Students at Center of HDTV

HDTV is beginning to have a presence at colleges and broadcast schools -- an important shift that ensures that broadcasters and other content creators can find young, upstart talent that is comfortable working with a new way of capturing images.

"It's not just about learning to work with new technology," said Sheldon Reisler, coordinator of Centennial College's broadcasting and film program, based in Toronto. "It's learning about the new format and how the information-rich images impact the telling of our stories."

Centennial equipped its broadcasting studio with four Hitachi 1080i HDTV cameras to help train students in HDTV techniques and production values. It's the first college in the Toronto region to use the cameras in a learning environment.

Reisler said the new format will bring about a lot of changes to the curriculum taught in his program. "Conventional television can't show details very well, so a lot of time is spent splicing in close-ups of a weapon or jewel or other plot detail," he added. "An HD camera can capture that and show you the expression on the character's face all in one beautiful frame."

And the new cameras will also give students a better understanding of set design for HD. "The broader field gives viewers additional information about the environment and the story," Reisler said. "There's a new level of scrutiny that has to be applied to every aspect of television production." The HD cameras are the first step in a three-year plan to bring Centennial's broadcasting program up to the same standards the industry is slowly incorporating. The studio's control room will get HD monitors and digital switchers, and videotape eventually will be replaced by high-capacity servers that will store the audio and visual information digitally.

Reisler said Centennial graduates will have an advantage in the job market because they'll know how to apply HD standards to everything from storyboards to set design.

Students in the Los Angeles area are also getting exposed to HDTV via a new program launched by National Mobile Television in Torrance, Calif. Known as CENTRO (The Center for Education in TV and Radio), students interested in pursuing a career in television and radio broadcasting as talent, production or technical engineers can receive hands-on training from award-winning faculty and industry leaders. The bilingual broadcasting institute is aimed at training and empowering those interested in pursuing an exciting career in TV and radio and foreign journalists and technicians looking for high-end training, or for those currently in the industry who would like a refresher course utilizing the latest technology and high-end digital equipment available today.

"We built a fully operational TV and radio station and studio with equipment currently being used in the industry," NMT CEO Mark Howorth said. "We will be training our students on EVS, Zodiak Switcher, Deko, Tapeless P2 environment with Avid Unity. Most broadcast programs rely on using old or donated equipment, much of which won't actually be seen by graduates in the field. CENTRO is committed to offering practical and applied learning."

For those interested in radio, participants enroll in an intensive four-month radio talent and production program. Enrollment costs are \$12,000 for the TV program and \$7,000 for the radio program, and classes are limited to 30 people for the TV programs and 20 for the radio.

Rolando Nichols, a UCLA journalism instructor and Univision journalist, approached Howorth and NMT about the idea. Howorth said a group of minority investors were on board with the plan and Nichols also obtained a Small Business Administration loan to launch this program.