Hi there, and welcome to the Cleveland State Community College Library. We are more than just a building that holds a lot of books - we’re working hard to bring the library’s knowledge, technology, and resources to you wherever you where you are. This recording will give you a quick run-down of one of the great educational resources you can access on campus - Camtasia.

Camtasia is a screencast recorder and editing tool. It allows you to create video tutorials and presentations using a direct image of your computer screen or Power Point presentation. It was first released by Techsmith in 2002, and as of March, 2018, our library has version 8.4. The software is available anytime the library is open in both Studio Connect and Studio 2.

Admittedly, my experience with Camtasia is limited. So I went looking for someone to help me understand the software a little better. One frequent Camtasia-er on campus is Kimberly Harrington, our resident Math Lab specialist. I’ve got her here with me today to tell us a little about how she uses Camtasia and how it helps our math students in- and out-side of the classroom.

Kimberly, what do you do with Camtasia?

I use Camtasia to make our math lab's orientation videos. I usually make them every semester since we need to update information in them. The screencast shows students how the software works and how to access the features they’ll need in their studies. I use the audio to explain what I’m doing and where I’m clicking on-screen and why they might find the features helpful.

Do your students find the videos helpful? I assume they do, since you keep making them! What do the students tell you?

Our students and instructors both find them helpful. Not only does it allow them to have a copy of the information on our course home page, but students who miss the first class or register late can get the same information as all of the other students.

When I hear from students about the videos from the math lab and in other courses, I hear that they love being able to watch and re-watch videos at their own pace, independently. It often means they can save their questions for the really tough stuff, and they aren’t so hesitant to ask when the content questions come around - they don’t feel like they’re “pestering” people - or, some of them are accessing these at two in the morning, so asking their professor and getting an immediate response isn’t an option.

So I don’t think the value is hard to demonstrate, but it does take some effort to get these things ready to go - Kimberly, did you find it hard to learn how to use the software?

There was definitely a learning curve. I had one of our media specialists on campus show me some of the basics, and that took about 30 minutes. The first time I made the videos, it took me
almost a full day to make and edit a 20 minute video. I think learning which settings worked best was the hardest part for me. I have had times when I selected the wrong computer audio and it affected the quality of my video.

I think just getting in front of the software and starting to play around is the key, as long as you’re moderately tech-savvy. And if you’re not tech-savvy, or just want to get a jump-start, you can always schedule some time with a librarian or the Dynamic Instruction department for help with Camtasia.

Now that you’re an expert, how much time do you spend making videos?

Once I was familiar with the functions, it only takes 2.5 - 3 hours to make a 20 - 25 minute video, and about 10 minutes of that is Camtasia producing the video. Much of my time is spent editing it to make it look more professional. For example, if I’m using a power point presentation and then show something online, I’ll make sure the transition is smooth, and that the browser looks clean, cropping the screen so that you can’t see any other tabs. I also highlight various portions of the video and adding those features in increases the editing time.

So it’s a little time investment, but worth it. What are your favorite and least favorite things about Camtasia?

The thing I like best is how I can go back and make changes to the videos without needing to record the entire video over. I make more than one orientation video, because they may vary by course. However, I can record the common information separately and then splice it onto other videos. Similarly, I can cut out a mistake and add in another track with corrected information. A disadvantage that my colleagues have run into is that it can be difficult to edit videos made with older versions of the program, however. In those cases it’s often easier just to remake the video.

I did see the software is already sending pop-ups for us to upgrade our version 8.4 to version 9 - hopefully these days they’re able to ensure backwards-compatibility more than they have in the past. Kimberly, thank you so much for sharing your Camtasia experience with us!

CSCC faculty and staff, if you’re looking for a great way to help your students learn and be more productive through independent learning, Camtasia is a great tool for you to investigate. Schedule a time with the Dynamic Instruction Media Specialists or a librarian, or view the screencast tutorial (created using Camtasia, I will add) and how-to guide to screencasting, both included in this subject guide.

Happy screencasting, everyone!