

Beginnings of Tech Training at DMACC

Written by Marcia Albertson

Technology came to our desktops and computer labs at DMACC in the early 1980's; however, because desktop computers were new, the college had not considered the concept of training faculty and staff! No one gave a thought about how employees should learn to use them. When desktop computers first came to DMACC, employees learned on their own when something new came to their labs or offices. All employees were so good at sharing what they learned within their department or with the faculty who taught that technology. It was not the best way at all to approach the situation. Computers were unheard of; then, all of a sudden, they were on our desks and in our classrooms! Without the willingness of staff to share what they were learning, one can imagine the chaos that would have happened. It was the "learn-as-you-go" approach.

Remember the Apple IIe? That was the first desktop computer on a DMACC campus! I'm not talking about the mainframe computer system used for all administrative tasks, but the first personal computers we had on our desktops. Remember learning the DOS operating system? WordPerfect? WordStar? Lotus? That was a long time ago!! Change came so quickly!

As the use of personal computers spread, we started "user's groups" for all who desired to take the extra step to learn more about the technology they had on their desk or in their computer lab. We usually met over the noon hour, and we compiled a notebook of each "lesson" that was presented. For example, there was a WordPerfect User Group, etc.

In 1990, DMACC had the foresight to start offering computer training classes to the public on the new Microsoft software - Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, and more. Training centers on this software were just starting in this area, and the general public responded enthusiastically to the offerings. We created classes for using the personal computers. We created all the training materials ourselves as everything was so new that we had to develop everything on our own.

DMACC staff and faculty were extremely interested in learning more as well. So in the computer training lab in Building 8 that was used for general public training classes, we reserved three seats for DMACC personnel in every class offered to the public. Our staff was great - they were so eager to learn! I was still using the approach of learning it all on my own, but now I was able to formally train others so they wouldn't have to learn on their own. This was the first organized attempt to train employees.

As training on personal computers was expanding, DMACC was in the process of switching from the main frame computer system, which had been used for many years for every administrative task, to a new system in the early 1990's. Banner was developed from the

ground up and customized for every administrative need. Years of planning and countless hours of work went into building Banner. There was a training committee created around that time because the college realized what a massive undertaking it would be to train every employee at every campus. I was asked to develop and to train every employee at every campus starting in the fall of 1994 on how to use Banner. There was a training room in Building 1 which was used for Banner training on the Ankeny campus. For the other four campuses, I brought a computer and an overhead projector with me for the training and used whatever lab that was available.

I loved training staff from the beginning in the 80's to Banner in the 90's. After Banner training was completed, I asked if they would create a full-time staff technical training for Banner and Microsoft training classes. It was put on hold, but eventually that happened – thankfully! I hired a lot of great trainers over the years for day and evening classes, but there are two people in particular whom I hired to help train and develop materials - Kathleen Zimmerman and Nola Hanson. I'm very proud about that!

We started helping faculty who used technology in the classroom in the 90's, either individually or in small group classes. We met with every new employee at Ankeny and introduced them to the basics of using technology at DMACC. Non-credit computer classes were still being offered to the public with three spots still reserved for DMACC personnel. Eventually the classes were offered to DMACC staff only, and the response was great. Some of the training was hands on, and other classes were offered to DMACC staff as computer demonstrations.

Documentation/handouts/reference cards were always key to the training that was offered in everything that was taught. We didn't purchase any outside documentation; all were developed by our own staff. We created a Help Desk web site for DMACC employees which became the central point of training information for employees. We also used a blog offering tips and other "how-to's" on the portal.

A lot of key faculty and staff and administration built a solid foundation for technical training at DMACC that started back in the 1980's. There were technical training committees, administrators, faculty in business and office credit classes, part-time faculty, and others who developed and taught and supported every employee to use the technology during each phase in transition from typewriters to personal computers to networks and on to the leading edge technology currently available in the state.

The instructors and support personnel we used from the very beginning days were the very best possible for staff training. There weren't any better people anywhere, and I was so fortunate to have worked with so many key people. From administration to the instructors we used to the support personnel who made everything possible, they all helped create a foundation for faculty and staff training at DMACC.

What a gratifying roller-coaster ride it was, and I will always be ever so grateful to every individual with whom I worked along the way!!

This was the start - thankfully DMACC realized the importance of staff technical training and continues to this day to build on this foundation.

Thoughts From a DMACC Teacher Who Appreciated the Tech Training

Judy Vogel

I started teaching at DMACC in the fall of 1999. I came here with a very limited knowledge of using the computer and the internet, and that was a concern for me. Part of my orientation was to meet with Marcia Albertson along with one other new teacher. Marcia was so kind, encouraging, and patient. She provided the knowledge and confidence that I needed to start this new job. She also reassured me that she would be available if I had any questions or problems. I took her up on that offer several times! In fact, she even came to my office to help me, and we shared lunch together. I remember getting a series of lessons by email that Marcia created. I would save all of them and referred to them many times.

I remember attending several sessions that Kathleen Zimmerman provided to groups of employees. What originally felt so overwhelming started to make sense, and I felt more proficient with the technical tools provided to me. I remember Kathleen managing those sessions as well as any instructor I had in college!

Most of my training came through the sessions I took with Nola Hanson. I think I took just about every session she offered! I liked to take them because I wanted to learn new skills, to refresh what I had already learned (and had forgotten), to get updates on changes in software, and to enjoy her company! She always made me feel comfortable to ask questions or to get some one-on-one assistance. Nola was asked by the Speech Department to provide an in-service session on PowerPoint for the faculty. All the speech teachers agreed that Nola provided an extremely helpful presentation. Nola put together booklets for all her sessions along with 1-page cheat sheets. They had a prominent place on my bookshelf within reaching distance from the computer! Another area of assistance was helping faculty to create websites and then helping them to upload syllabi and other information.

Each time the college made a change in the software, materials would have to be updated, and more sessions would be offered. Other decisions regarding technology at DMACC related to technology in the classroom. Training was provided when the white boards came along and for the "desks" in the classrooms with the Elmo, VHS and DVD players, internet connection, and p-drive access. When I first started teaching at DMACC, I would push a cart from room to room if I needed to record speeches or show a sample speech. That was a real challenge when the halls were full with students! These ladies, and several others, helped bring technology into the classroom and DMACC into teaching and learning in the 21st century! Thank you!