

## Creating Multimedia with Free Software

Cape Town: At the last meeting of the WACC 2008 Congress, I met a radio producer from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I asked her if she could share some audio excerpts for my website on stories for peace building. She said unfortunately, no. Her organization did not have the equipment or budget for producing audio files.

\$20 for a headset with a microphone, and the free audio editing program, Audacity, is all she needs. Audacity is a great sound editor that is especially appropriate for international contexts. The multilingual version comes in numerous languages, and there is a portable version that runs off of a flash drive or CD for people relying on cyber caf  s. With one hour of practice, you can begin creating your own audio content.

Yesterday I showed a free image editing program to a delegate from Uganda, called FastStone Image Viewer. It has everything you need for basic image touch-ups – resizing, cropping, red eye reduction, even annotation tools. The intuitive interface is very user-friendly. One of the most time-saving features is the batch image optimization tool. We reduced 200 digital photographs from 2 Mb each to 90 Kb with only one click. Then we used a single-screen dialogue box to create a slideshow, optionally with music. This is the program that we used to create the slideshows that were shown at the Congress plenary sessions.

The most accessible free video editor is Microsoft Movie Maker, because it comes bundled with Windows XP and above. With it, you can create video footage live with a web camera, download footage from a camcorder, import photographs and add movement to them, and add soundtracks and voiceovers. Again, the software is simple enough that you can become productive with it in an afternoon.

All of these tools are easy and affordable. The only constraint is bandwidth to download them. If you have good Internet access, and work with organizations that can't easily download large files, I encourage you to burn some CDs with these, and other, free software tools. This will enable more organizations to begin producing using multimedia content in their work. And as we have heard convincingly throughout the Congress, communicators for peace need all of the tools at their disposal to foster better understanding and empathy.

Attached below is a list of these free software tools and more, with links to the websites where you can download them. I include this file as a guide on the software CDs that I distribute. I've also attached the slides from my multimedia software workshop, which includes links to other websites of interest, such as free blog websites and photo sharing sites.

- Free Multimedia Software links, and More (PDF, 250 Kb)

- Multimedia Software Slides (in Open Office format, 1.5 Mb)

If you have other software tools or websites to recommend, please share them in a comment.

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