Shoot It Mos![1]

–Patrica Gillespie

Sharisse Akagi, Drew Nakahara, and Justin Maghamil.

I rush to the Kamehameha Schools studio early in the morning to turn on all the equipment while my student crew trickles in. Some students come from the other side of the island, so getting in on time is occasionally a problem, especially if the busses are held up by an accident along the highway. My assistant, and technician *par excellence,* puts the script that has been emailed from the Dean of Students Office into the teleprompter. I make adjustments and insert the news stories that we will air that day. By this time, the student director is marking the script and the character generator operator is putting in the titles and special announcements. The anchors review the script; camera operators practice their shots; the audio engineer tests talent mics; and the floor manager checks with everyone to make sure that everything is set and ready to go. In the midst of the preparations, a teacher arrives at the studio with her homeroom students to watch the live broadcast.

On most days things run smoothly. We have five or ten minutes of broadcast, depending on the schedule, and we must stay within our time allotment so that homeroom teachers can cover whatever else needs to be done that morning. There are, however, those times when things don't go so smoothly—a mic battery dies in the middle of the broadcast; the character generator is not working; a wrong button gets pushed; a monitor goes on the blink, or we have alien looking words on the top of the screen that won't disappear. It's a live broadcast! At 7:35 in the morning, the adrenaline is pumping. Students have to think and act quickly to correct any mistakes, but they always come through. Having a live morning broadcast each day has been a wonderful way to bring our school together and create a sense of unity among students and teachers. Students love to see themselves and their friends on television. And, I hope, we not only offer entertainment, but educate as well.

Learning to Teach Media

I began my career in education as a drama teacher. Although I loved what I was doing, I felt I needed some new challenges. One summer I decided to enroll at the University of California at Berkeley to take a very intense course in filmmaking. On my return to Hawai'i, I discovered that if I took classes at the University of Hawai'i, I could work as an intern at the local Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) station and would be paid minimum wage. As a single mother, going to

[1] MOS is an old film term meaning "mit-out-sound." As the story goes, a German director used the German word 'mit' which means "with".

Morning broadcast of "Puka Mai Ka La" (The Dawning).

school and trying to live on this salary presented challenges. However, with some major adjustments in my living style, I was able to attend the University of Hawai'i for nine months. This was a very energizing time in my life. I took every media course I could squeeze into my schedule. I made some short documentaries and also made lots and lots of mistakes. The engineers at the PBS station generously helped me with all my technical problems. And despite the mistakes, one of my short documentaries was good enough to play on the educational portion of PBS's morning programming!

However, I couldn't live like this forever. I had to get a job that paid more. I learned there was an opening for a videographer at Kamehameha Schools. This entry-level video job involved documenting the traveling pre-school program. I applied, and thankfully got the job. Over the years at Kamehameha my media job changed, and I found myself producing curriculum tapes for elementary teachers and supervising the audio/visual support department. In my spare time, I worked on drama and video projects with the elementary teachers. When a video teaching job became available at the high school, I decided to apply. Although Kamehameha has had a television program since 1977, teachers had come and gone and none had stayed long enough to really build up the program. I took on the challenge.

The first thing that had to be done was to purchase some small cameras for the students to use. All we had were two huge studio cameras. Can you imagine students carrying these on the school bus! At that time Hi-8 camcorders were just coming on the market and they were a perfect choice. Unfortunately, in 1989, many school administrators regarded video production courses as a fringe subject, so trying to justify expensive equipment purchases was a very difficult task. Nevertheless, I persevered, and with each new project I attempted the program began to flourish. Nowadays, video technology is very popular with teachers and it finds uses at all levels and in a variety of subject areas. Of course, the technology is constantly evolving, and just when I thought I had learned everything I possibly could about analog video, computers came on the scene. That was when I decided it was time for a sabbatical. I would immerse myself in computers for four months —this time as an intern at the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. This was another exciting time for me, although it came with total technology overload! I learned as much as I could about computers and software programs and when I returned to Kamehameha, I felt much more competent to teach the new media. Trying to keep on top of new advances in technology is still a challenge, and always will be.

The Video Production Program at Kamehameha High School

The aim of the Video Production program at Kamehameha High School is to teach students how to visu-

ally express themselves in an electronic medium. During the semester, the students experience the different steps in the production process:

1. Pre-production includes researching, planning, writing a treatment (narration of production ideas), writing the script, drawing the storyboard, casting the actors, reserving equipment, lining up crews and locations, scheduling interviews, and securing music rights;

2. Production involves the actual videotaping of the event and includes interviews and B-roll (coverage) footage; and

3. Post-production involves logging the numbers of each shot, digitizing footage into the computer by means of firewire, creating an edit decision list, and editing. This stage might also include writing music for production or creating special effects.

All this is achieved with the use of digital camcorders and computer editing.

Students begin with a series of assignments designed to teach them the different production elements such as storyboarding, scripting, and continuity. For example, they may look at footage from feature films where continuity errors occur. Next, they will storyboard their own MOS (without sound) adventure (8 shots only) in which they must take an object from one place to another, paying particular attention to the continuity of screen direction, costumes, props, etc. This work must be done using the camera, because students must practice thinking visually so that they are always aware of how one shot cuts to another. Their short piece is then digitized and set to music. This assignment not only teaches careful planning but also introduces students to the first elements of editing. The final project of the semester is either a mini-feature or a music video.

After one semester of learning the basic skills of filming and editing, students can take Advanced Video Production and use their newly acquired skills to work on news stories that air on the campus-wide daily broadcast. Many of my Advanced Video Production students repeat this advanced class. Sometimes, if it is impossible to fit Advanced Video Production into a student's schedule, the student has the option to do a directed study program. Because we do a daily morning broadcast, our Advanced Video Production students produce news stories on campus events, do feature stories on other students or events, and create Public Service Announcements (PSAs). PSA'S are one of the easier projects to do because the must be short (30–60 seconds) and concise enough to get their message across. They are also not too difficult to storyboard.

Students create PSAs on Hawaiian values, on issues important to young people, and on forthcoming school events. For example, two girls created a PSA called "Courtesy Check" to heighten student awareness of the staff on campus who prepare food and keep the campus clean. Their message was aimed at getting students to pick up their litter and to show courtesy and thanks to the people who are there to help them. Two male students felt it was important to remind students that illegal car racing can kill. They wrote their copy, shot some footage, and then found some pictures out of magazines to finish the piece. Two other students created a PSA on a drama production being staged at the school.

After completing these relatively easy assignments, students can choose to do a full feature—an instructional video ("How to be a Rock Star!" for example), a mini-documentary, or even a short original music video. On one occasion, students wrote a script for a film in which they imagined that it was the year 2050. A strange disk was found, which was featured in a special news report. The anchor of the special news report interviewed a mad scientist (one of our willing and talented teachers!) who had found the disk, and he explained what it was. The student who played the news anchor had her first taste of sitting in front of the camera in that role. She discovered that she enjoyed the experience, and she is now a top news anchor at one of Hawai'i's local TV stations.

The "Senior Video" is another very popular and well-received Advanced Video Production project. This involves a compilation of senior year events, interviews, and photos from years past. The idea is to develop a theme that holds all this together in a creative and interesting way. Last year's theme was "At the Movies," and the introduction to each section (special events, senior activities, sports) was a parody of a well-known movie—for example, *Dirty Dancing* was used to introduce the Performing and Visual Arts section. The project is demanding and the seniors involved are required to handle every aspect of production—from planning, shooting, and editing to marketing the video. The students are also responsible for obtaining permission to use any copyrighted music.

We also have a video news magazine called *Nā Pōki'i* that we produce once a semester and air on public access

television. This is usually a compilation of the semester's best news stories hosted by two anchors. For the original show, one of my advanced students took the school fight song and had some of our performing arts students sing it traditionally and then jazz it up. She then had another student edit images along with the students singing. This resulted in a very catchy opening broadcast for our video magazine.

Some of our advanced students also include interviews with people who work in the entertainment/media business. Past interviews have been with local actors, national actors, cinematographers, comics, and news anchors. We were very lucky recently when one of our graduates, Doug Nam, brought his good friend, cinematographer Dean Semler to visit our classes. Dean, whose work includes such films as *Dances with Wolves*, *Mad Max*, and *Bruce Almighty*, was in town to receive the Kodak Award of Excellence at the Hawai'i International Film Festival (HIFF). He spent two hours with us talking about his work and telling us some of his secrets about how to get such amazing shots. One of our advanced students interviewed him for our news magazine. This type of opportunity offers students a chance to talk with experts in their particular field and to share with others what they have learned.

The Video Club

In addition to the beginning and advanced video classes, we also have a video club that meets once a week. This club is composed of students in the video classes who want to do more work with video, as well as students who can't fit the video class into their schedules. We've tried many different projects with the video club, some of which have not proved workable. However, thanks to my assistant, Jay, we now have a new activity that seems to be working well. In a friendly competition, the club members create three-minute videos on a designated theme. They work in pairs and have two weeks to complete the assignment. The first assignment is a "How To…" video. A recent video club assignment brought in three entries, all a little rough, but not bad for the first try. A second assignment is to create a video involving some type of chase (other than a car chase). The entries turned out to be creative enough to be entered in an outside competition. Video Club members are now working on "15 Ways to Use Masking Tape." The students who take on the challenge of creating these videos can win something just for trying (like a DV tape or blank DVD). Club members vote on who gets the grand prize. This project has created a lot of excitement and students who have never picked up a camera before have produced some amazing videos.

Documentary Film Making

Because Kamehameha Schools is a school for native Hawaiians, cultural documentation is an important area of emphasis in our video program. This can range from documenting family history to producing a video in a foreign country. It's a big jump for a secondary school student to go from creating a video with images and music to producing a documentary, including two or three rewrites, from start to finish. The process involves technical skills, organizational skills, people skills, and critical thinking skills. There can be no doubt that producing a documentary becomes a powerful learning experience for many students. Visually recording one's *kupuna* (elders) talking about her family genealogy and history is an empowering experience for students. They become the family historians, the documenters of important traditions. They assume the role of preservers and perpetuators of their culture for future generations.

In Hawai'i we live at the gateway to the Pacific and Asia, therefore it seems appropriate for students here to examine their cultural ties to this area of the world. I have been fortunate to be able to take students on different video projects to China, Indonesia, Tahiti, the Marquesas, Rapa Nui, the Cook Islands, and, most recently, Alaska. We have produced award-winning cultural documentaries on all these places and the Hawai'i International Film Festival has used several of our productions for their Cultural and Media Literacy Program. What better way for young people to learn about the cultures of others than through the eyes of their peers?

The process of creating a documentary is a complex one. It involves skills such as doing research; interviewing experts; and showing cultural sensitivity as well as patience and flexibility. It demands many hours of footage shot in another country where, perhaps, the interviews must be done in another language. On returning home, students must take those many hours of footage and form them into a documentary that other teens would want to see. None of this comes easy for high school students, who, in addition to the production demands, may be experiencing culture shock on their first venture outside of Hawai'i.

Most of the projects involving travel to other countries have been financed through grants from Kamehameha Schools and from the local public access station. On my first trip, I took three students to Indonesia to produce educational videos for the Indonesian film "My Sky, My Home" directed by Slamet Rahardjo. I had served as a Peace Corps teacher in the '60s in Malaysia, so I was familiar with the

area and knew the language somewhat. However, this was the first time I had taken students out of the country, and it was a weighty responsibility. We were all shocked when we arrived at our hotel in Jakarta and found it to be a run-down, colonial structure with a rather questionable clientele frequenting the premises!

New anxieties arose when we took a second-class train across Java and then made a side trip to Mount Bromo by bus. What had promised to be a beautiful trip up the mountain to watch the sunset, turned out to be a terrifying and treacherous ride—twisting and turning on a switchback road with no side barriers. When we finally arrived at the top of the mountain, several of us felt quite ill. But it was an adventure—one that we were able to appreciate more fully when we had made it safely back to Bali.

When shooting in a foreign country, one has to be prepared for every contingency. I hadn't realized that the Balinese Galungan Days holiday would fall quite when it did. It is their biggest holiday of the year and its timing depends on the Balinese calendar of 210 days. This means that this holiday falls in a different month each year. We arrived right in the middle of the ten-day holiday and everything had come to a complete halt, including all the schools that we had hoped to visit. However, we made the best of it by rewriting our script to include the festivities. Everyone was going to temple to make offerings to their ancestors. The markets were filled with brightly colored rice cakes, fruits, and food used for offerings. The villagers, dressed in their finest attire, would parade to the temples with these items on their heads. All the homes had tall, decorated bamboo poles in front that reminded our students of their tradition of Christmas lights. In the end, the adjustments we made added a lot of color and interest to the final production.

In 1993, a school project took us to China to produce videos for the Hawai'i International Film Festival's (HIFF) Cultural and Media Literacy program. We planned to do our documentary on the film "Heartstrings" directed by Sun Zhou. I accompanied two public school teachers and two public school students. They had received a grant from the public access television station to cover their expenses. In addition, I received a grant from Kamehameha Schools to take five of our students along. During the three weeks of the trip, we shot over 60 hours of footage and experienced things one only sees in movies. We had made connections with the Beijing Film Institute through HIFF, and so we were able to tour the school and interview some of the famed fifth generation filmmakers. We visited a Beijing Opera School and an acupuncture school, and traveled on boats and trains—one in which the air conditioning broke and the heat rose to over 100 degrees!

We were fortunate to have the Kamehameha Schools Chinese language teacher accompany us on this trip. Lily Lu's knowledge of Chinese protocol and her facility with the language opened doors to us that might otherwise have been closed. Projects like this allow students to look closely at their own culture as well as other cultures. Ties with host country filmmakers have provided an opportunity for our young filmmakers to experience a country in a unique way, while focusing on the goal of sharing this experience with others.

When we traveled to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) to meet the Hawaiian canoe, Hōkūlea, we took a contingent of video students, science students, and performing arts students. We were accompanied by Randy Fong of the Kamehameha Performing Arts program. I was fortunate in having as my assistant one of my former students, Leah Kihara, who had accompanied me on the Indonesian trip. She had since graduated from the University of Southern California (USC) School of Cinema. This made the long hours of documenting all the activities possible, and when we returned Leah worked with the two girls who documented the trip.

Obtaining footage for projects like those I have described is not an easy task for high school students. They must start off with some type of initial idea or outline even though they might have no idea what the country or culture that they are visiting is like or whom they will be interviewing. It's difficult to make young filmmakers understand how important pre-production planning is for the success of a project. Nevertheless, preliminary research is essential. Once you reach your destination, the teacher's job is to make sure that students are developing a coherent story line and that they are getting the interviews and footage they need. One of the most important things to do when going on a trip with students is to have them keep a journal of their daily activities. This makes writing the script so much easier for the students when they return. One time I forgot to make this a requirement and it made the script-writing process twice as long and tedious.

When the students are back home, they log all the hours of footage and then select the clips that pertain to their particular topic. After reading over the hard copy of their interviews and highlighting the important parts, they sit down

at the computer and list every shot and piece of information they think is important. The next step is to think of a lead that would grab a channel surfer's attention. Then they write the audio portion, keeping the selected footage in mind. In technical terms, video footage without the narration is called B-roll. Students need to learn the importance of writing and rewriting the script to produce a quality product. They also need to learn the lesson that it is better to show than to tell. The images that they use should fit logically with their words.

With an AVID Xpress DV digital editor, the final creative stages of composition tend flow more easily. Students arrange their images in a bin that lets them experiment with placement. Then they drop the images into a timeline with their narration. The digital editor makes it easy to add special effects such as page turns, dissolves, and fly-in or break-up titles. Before they know it, they have a short documentary designed to keep the teenage channel surfer interested long enough to learn something!

Challenges

One of the challenges we face in our program is that our class periods are only 40 to 45 minutes long, so we are constantly working against time. Documentary production and other long projects are very involved and require painstaking work that is difficult to fit into this schedule. So my students often come into the editing lab during their free periods, after school, or on weekends. Many of them are also involved in sports and other school activities, which makes time management of the greatest importance.

Another challenge, which is one that all media teachers face, is how to deal with copyrighted music. There are rules and exemptions for schools to use copyrighted music, but it is often difficult to determine what constitutes fair use. The solution is to use non-copyrighted music. Over time we have built up an extensive collection of non-copyrighted music. Apple recently produced a new program called "Sound Tracks" that enables students to write their own music. It is quite simple to do. This program has been a blessing for the video production teacher! I now require my students to use *only* non-copyrighted music or write their own. Thus, when students produce a video that shows promise and we want to put it on our web page, include it in our news magazine, or send it to a student video contest, we don't have to go back and replace all the copyrighted music. Students simply create their music in "Sound Tracks," convert the mix to an AIFF file, and import it in to the editing program.

The appropriate use of lyrics can create another set of challenges. What is appropriate use in a given case? And even when students are asked to bleep out questionable words, somehow one or two always seem to find their way into a video and obtain a hearing during campus-wide morning announcements!

Words of Advice to Teachers New to Video Production

The digital age has certainly arrived at Kamehameha Schools. It's quite common for teachers in many classes to give students the option of producing video assignments in lieu of written ones. We recently opened another video lab upstairs in our library so that students in other classes can do video related projects. I recommend that teachers planning to do a video project with their students try out the assignment themselves beforehand. You have to try things out on your own to get an idea of how complex it is to produce a short video. Viewing a well-produced video is insufficient to gain an understanding of what goes into to making one. Another recommendation is that shorter is always better! A tight three-minute piece is always preferable to a boring 10-minute piece.

As a filmmaker, I empathize with students who struggle with their projects. The level of sophistication that the technology offers and the number of options that it makes available creates even more complexity, and this means that even more can go wrong with a project. My advice to anyone who is going to embark on a video project is to be sure to give adequate time for shooting and editing. Projects take a lot longer than you imagine or expect. A general rule of editing is to allow one hour for every minute of program. Always remember to back up your project. No matter how good the editing system, computers crash from time to time—a nightmare when you are on a tight schedule.

I recently opened the 2003 Hawaii International Film Festival guide and quickly turned to the Hawai'i Filmmakers section. I had anticipated that I would see a listing for the documentary that my husband and I had produced. Of course it was there. But I noted with delight and surprise that several of the listings for short videos were produced by some of my former students who were directors, producers, assistant directors, cinematographers, and actors in their own right. Hawaii now has a growing, grass-roots, film community producing quality products. I am pleased to note that many of my former students are leading the way. After the

HIFF festival, we had our own Ohana film festival honoring these young filmmakers.

The journey from analog to digital has occurred in a matter of a few years. New technologies are probably on their way. The teacher of media faces a constant adjustment to change—meeting new challenges and turning these challenges into possibilities for students. It's been wonderful to see so many students blossom in our program and witness so many reaching their potential. I once had a very creative student who had been on academic probation most of his high school career. However, in video class, he was brilliant—always editing and creating very interesting pieces. After being involved in our media program, he won an award in a local student video contest. His mother was so excited. She felt he had finally found a direction in life. She was right. He went into television work right out of high school and is now a producer at a local television station! With media taking a leading roll in education these days, hopefully we can reach more students like the one I described, and turn them on to learning. Media education teaches students new skills and abilities that will prepare them to thrive in the 21st century.

Student, Advanced Video Productions

–Kelsey Pavlosky, Kamehameha High School

"Camera one. Can I get a two shoot, please?" I ask into the intercom.

"It's there," crackles the voice of the floor manager through the speaker.

I press a few buttons on the switcher and realize that the cables feeding the images from the cameras to the program are crossed! It is now 7:31 a.m. and just about time to go to black before we go on the air. Everyone scrambles to help the camera people, and we manage to untangle the wires just at the bell that signals the start of homeroom and the beginning of morning announcements. As I sit back in my chair to watch the opening credits, I smile to myself.

Last year, I stumbled upon video production by chance. I needed one more credit in my schedule for the second semester and video production was the only visual arts elective open at the time. So I jumped into the world of cameras, tapes, monitors, and cables feet first. I loved it. All of the students in the class have opportunities to get involved in many of the aspects of visual media, including shooting and editing news stories, public service announcements, mini-documentaries, and features, as well as music videos and entertainment pieces. I look forward to video class most days, but I find directing the morning news broadcast the most enjoyable. I have a grand time mapping out the shots for the program, determining where "spots" will be inserted, and trying to problem-solve on the spot when something doesn't go according to plan. I am exhilarated by the fast pace of television and the twinge of nervousness I feel when we are on the air and anything can happen. The success of the broadcast depends on how well we, as a production team, communicate with each other, which really depends on how organized I am! I'd like to claim that our program goes on without a hitch each time, no matter what problems we face prior to airing. However, it is not so.

"Have a great day," says talent one, smiling into the camera. I cue camera one for a wide shot and cut to it as the credits roll, fading to black as the last name nears the top of the screen. The video tape recorder stops recording, and I thank everyone for a great broadcast. It was far from flawless, though. I managed to make some real bloopers—putting the wrong devices on the preview buss and airing them, forgetting to cue my teammates…But the rest of the crew and my teachers tell me that I did a good job, and that the next day will be better yet. With classmates and teachers like the ones I have, it is hard not to agree. I walk out of the TV studio to my first period class, already thinking about tomorrow's broadcast.