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## **DigiMemo: Facilitating the Note Taking Process**

*by Serhat Kurt*

We take notes daily for various reasons. Note taking is very popular in school settings and generally recognized as an effective learning strategy (Kobayashi, 2005). Further, note taking is a complex process because it requires understanding, selection of information and writing ((Piolat et al, 2004). Some new technological tools may facilitate the note taking process. Among such tools is DigiMemo. In this document I first explain DigiMemo, then describe how I use DigiMemo in a higher education setting as a faculty member.

DigiMemo is a digital notepad with a pen very similar to an ordinary ink pen. What this tool does is sense the pen movements while you are writing or drawing on regular paper and it can save this information as BMP, JPG, GIF or PNG format or as PDF file. DigiMemo stores this information in its built-in memory (this memory can store up to 999 handwritten pages) or in an optional flash memory for expandable capacity. Not only can this information be transferred to a computer hard drive via USB port, this information can also be sent via Bluetooth technology as email through a cell phone. Shortly, this device lets users digitally view, edit, organize, email and share their handwritten notes without scanning.

This tool is very light. It can easily be held in one hand. It is also very compact. It can fit into a briefcase. The pen feels very comfortable to use and hand written notes are transferred into digital format accurately. DigiMemo's closest competition is Tablet PC. Tablet PC has some unique advantages over DigiMemo in terms of note taking. Tablet PC does a better job turning notes, especially non-character based information, into text. However, DigiMemo costs a lot less than Tablet PC at about \$100.

There are two downsides to this tool. The first one is the handwriting recognition software which can be bought additionally. With this software, character symbols can be converted into their equivalent text to be edited in MS Word or Excel as opposed to a scanned image of whatever was written or drawn. However, I find that using this feature was a little problematic. Converted texts usually have some errors and require some work to clean up the mistakes. You have to write very neatly to reduce the errors. I rarely used this handwriting recognition software.

Another downside is this device is fully compatible with only Windows. According to their web page, the producer of this tool does not offer any official support for Linux or Mac users (ACECAD, 2008). In order for Mac and Linux users to use this tool, they need separate

3rd party software which is not supported by the manufacturer. Therefore, if you are a Mac or Linux user, it is likely that you will be able to use this tool at a limit level.

Despite these downsides, I find this tool very useful as I use frequently. This tool makes it much easier to take digital notes while you are on the move. As part of my job, I regularly go to classrooms in my university to determine their technological needs. While I go around in the classrooms, I take such notes as “the computer in room 102 needs a new mouse” on my DigiMemo. At the end of my visit that day, I email my notes using my DigiMemo to our building manager who is responsible for buying, installing and fixing our equipment. Our building manager takes care of the rest. Not only does this process with DigiMemo save us time, but it also makes it possible for busy people to work together on their own schedule, which would be very difficult to do so otherwise.

Most of our classrooms have a projector and computer. In class, occasionally I use DigiMemo as a graphics tablet by hooking DigiMemo up to the computer to project the DigiMemo notes on the screen. My students and I add notes on the DigiMemo and these notes are projected on the screen for the whole class to see. I do this during discussions and brainstorming sessions to record and share students’ ideas to facilitate the learning process. Students can easily obtain a digital copy of the material they collaboratively created. This method is also a cost effective alternative to graphics tablets.

I apply this tool when giving feedback on students’ assignments. As I stated above, with this tool you write on regular paper. When students return a paper assignment, I place the student’s paper on DigiMemo and write my feedback regarding the paper on it. Then I give the student’s paper back with my notes on it and I keep the digital version for future reference. This is especially useful for big assignments that students turn in piece by piece during the semester with the final version given at the end. With the help of my DigiMemo, I easily follow students’ progress.

How I use DigiMemo is not limited to the examples I described above. I use this tool to take notes in faculty meetings, conferences and in other similar professional occasions. I further use this tool to prepare course materials as I easily add my hand-drawn notes (especially diagrams, charts etc) into Word, PowerPoint, Excel or Web-based documents I prepare for my classes.

Note taking is part of our daily lives and has become an essential component of the educational process. In educational settings, I believe DigiMemo can be an effective tool to take notes. Educators who are looking for affordable solutions can benefit from this tool.

## References

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