Tools for educators as education turns digital

NOSHIN SAIYARA

As educational services make a shift to become online, teachers and tutors are trying to adjust to the online methods of teaching & learning. This means establishing certain practices as educators will help them make their content more engaging for students. Bilkis Sultana, an associate professor at Kabi Nazrul Government College in Dhaka who has been taking classes online, shares an online teaching practice of hers, "It's harder for students to maintain attention during class when their instructor is not physically present in front of them. Speaking slowly helps my lectures not become monotonous as it is easier to get bored with a fast frequency of speech". Changing how teachers approach a classroom and adding some online tools to make their job easier will improve the student experience. The e-learning industry saw a boom in the demand for their tools, and many of their features have been upgraded and made free to help tutors. Here are a few free tools that can be used by anyone currently planning to organize their classes on Zoom or Google Classrooms-
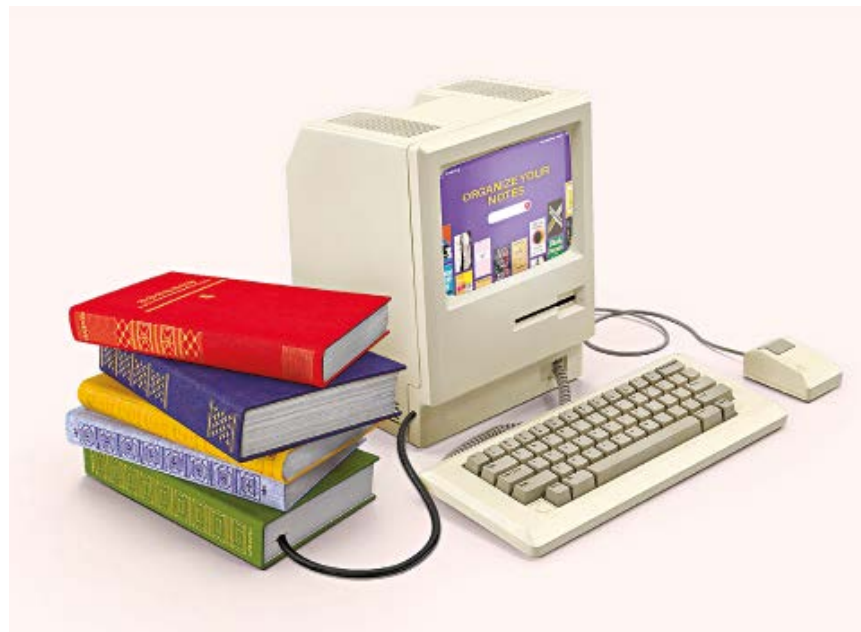
Livebinders

A tool that will allow you to organize your worksheets, lecture notes, online assignments, etc. in an online easy to access the folder. You can create customised folders on Livebinders and have them available for your students at all times. This is better than using Google drive because, in addition to organising files in folders, students can also collaborate on projects and share resources like documents, websites, and media on these binders. The binder also has a feature where it allows the instructors to add weekly or monthly tabs for students to check-in.

Formative

Formative has both paid and unpaid versions, the unpaid version providing access to one teacher at a time. It is a platform where you can design assessment tests and quizzes with the clean and seamless interface and outsource quizzes that you already have on google docs or any other electronic mode. You can also upload scanned versions of your handwritten quizzes, Camscanner is a free application for your phone that can help you do that. The most useful feature of this platform is that you can do live assessments for the quizzes you set and send instant feedback to your students too, by setting the correct answers and feedback for wrong answers on Formative. This will save a lot of time and increase the learning efficiency for your students. The site also has free tutorials for teachers with easy to understand instructions, so you do not need to be tech-savvy to use their features.

Calendly

If you are trying to organise group presentation sessions or individual advising appointment sessions with students personally, Calendly is a great tool for that. You can set up your available time slots for a day or a week and share the link with your student groups from them to sign up. This saves you the hassle from having to add your appointments to Google calendar manually and removes the possibility of overbooking. You can also export your Calendly appointments to your Google calendar if you want all your routines organised in one place.

Stormboard

Use Stormboard to draw figures and equations you cannot type ahead or want to add to your content during a live class. It is an online whiteboard that you can use for your classes as a replacement for your actual whiteboard you are used to using. The free version of this platform allows 5 users at a given time, so you can also have your students use this for group projects and presentations. You can also integrate this in with Microsoft Office in view-only mode, along with other collaborative applications like Slack or Teams.