

CUSTOMER STORY

Vancouver Film School

Shifts to Online Instruction in 11 Days



Vancouver Film School (VFS) is Canada's premier post-secondary entertainment arts institution, offering 15 production-oriented programs in film, animation, video game production, VR/AR development, motion and interactive design, and others. More than 25,000 alumni work for some of the world's top studios and most recognizable brands. VFS has sister campuses in Mumbai (DICE VFS) and Shanghai.

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COLIN GILES
HEAD OF ANIMATION AND SPECIAL EFFECTS,
VANCOUVER FILM SCHOOL

Challenges

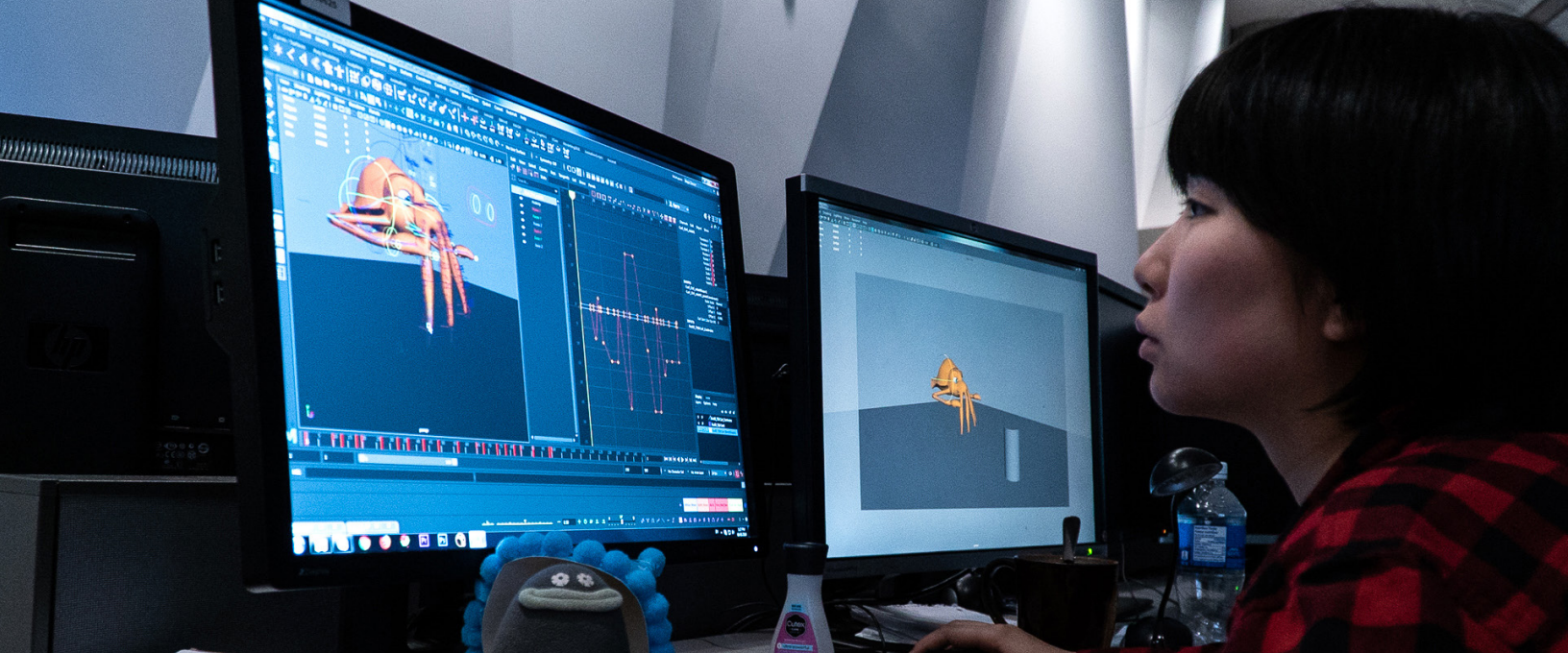
- Continue offering instruction and hands-on experiences when the campus closed for the pandemic
- Enable students to access the school's graphics-intensive applications and server farms from home internet connections, on any device
- Deploy the solution quickly so students could graduate on time

Solutions

- Installed Teradici Cloud Access Software on all 365 campus workstations, which have **NVIDIA Quadro RTX 5000 GPUs**
- Sent students a link to install Teradici Cloud Access Software on their personal Windows, Mac, and Linux devices, providing laptops to students who didn't have them
- Used Teradici Cloud Access Manager to broker connections to workstations and determine how many students used each application, for accurate licensing

Results

- Resumed hands-on projects on school workstations just one week after the pandemic lockdown
- Maintained quality of student work
- Delivered a good application experience even for students with slower internet speeds
- Laid technology foundation to offer new online classes and programs to students anywhere in the world, expanding potential enrollment
- Gave students experience using the same remote access technology used by many leading studios



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Since its founding in 1980, Vancouver Film School (VFS) has delivered hands-on, in-person learning to students preparing for careers in film, visual effects, game design, and other aspects of production. The school attracts students from around the world, who graduate with the skills in high demand at leading studios.

Online instruction was still in the planning stages when the campus abruptly had to close for the pandemic in March 2020. “Suddenly, we needed an efficient, elegant way for students to access graphics-intensive applications and share files—and we only had about a week,” says Colin Giles, Head of Animation and Special Effects.

The right solution would need to meet three criteria. First, enable students to produce work of the same quality as in previous years, using the same applications and peripherals they’d have on campus. Second, deliver a good application experience even over slower home internet connections. Third, be up and running quickly so students could graduate on time and get started in their careers.

VFS found its solution in Teradici Cloud Access Software. “We trust Teradici because leading film, animation, and gaming studios use the software,” Giles says. “That made it an easy decision.” Students with slower internet connections enjoy a good experience with graphics-intensive applications because Teradici Cloud Access Software adapts to current network conditions. It also supports the Wacom Cintiq 22HD and Pro 24 devices students use in certain classes.

Students were able to start working on hands-on assignments from home just 11 days after the shutdown. “We tested Teradici Cloud Access Software on a Friday, and by Monday, students were using it for class assignments,” Giles says. The IT team installed the software on the school’s more than 350 workstations and sent students a link to download the client software on their personal Windows, Mac, or Linux devices. (Students who didn’t have a personal machine were loaned one.) With one login, students can use any device, anywhere, to access a campus workstation with an NVIDIA GPU to run Autodesk Maya, Houdini, Foundry, Nuke, Unreal Engine, Deadline, and other production applications. “We tell students to think of their home machine as a second monitor to their computer back on campus,” Giles says. “With Teradici Cloud Access Software, the experience with graphics-intensive applications and Wacom Cintiq devices is the same from home as it is on campus.”

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The school smoothly transitioned from in-person to virtual instruction.

Students completed all the assignments they would have had they been on campus—with the same quality. Students who were behind when the term ended were allowed to keep their accounts active to complete any outstanding projects. One student had already spent hundreds of hours on her final project, a model of an old Western town. Working from home after the official term had ended, she used Teradici Cloud Access Software to render with Redshift and composite with Nuke on the school’s 200-node server farm. Five weeks after the pandemic lockdown, the student finished her final project. “The next Wednesday she interviewed with a game studio, and on Friday she accepted a job offer,” Giles says. “The studio where she works also uses Teradici Cloud Access Software, and her experience with remote work was a plus.”

Deployment was fast, and there’s almost no IT overhead. The IT team assigns students to workstations with a few clicks in Teradici Cloud Access Manager. Students automatically connect to the right workstation when they log in. Teradici Cloud Access Manager also shows which students use what applications, so VFS can purchase just the right number of licenses—and not overpay.

As the campus re-opens in phases, VFS for the first time is offering a combination of online and in-person instruction. Students who would rather not return to campus can access their campus workstations via Teradici Cloud Access Software and view simulcast sessions of lectures held in the classroom. The school is also preparing to offer new online classes, including Introduction to Maya, and a fully online diploma program. Online classes could be available to students anywhere in the world, significantly expanding the school’s capacity without a brick-and-mortar investment.

Giles concludes, “Teradici Cloud Access Software is the backbone of our blended learning program. It enabled our students to graduate on time with the promised skills, and even allowed us to expand our course offerings. Without Teradici, I can’t imagine how would have continued operating during the lockdown.”

Cloud Access Software is included in the Cloud Access Plus subscription.
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