2016-2017 Community Engagement Fellows
Project Report
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Project Overview Video Booktalks Highlighting Whatcom County Library System
Staff and Collections

This project is still in progress, and will consist of a collaboration between
Whatcom County Library System, Western Washington University Assistant
Professor Joe Gosen, and students in his Intro to Visual Journalism course this Fall.

Joe and I have had several robust conversations about this project, and have
agreed to reconnect as soon as Spring Term is over to map out the best way
forward.

Our intention is to have students create a "treatment" for a series of short (2
– 3 minute) video booktalks consisting of opening and closing credits, theme music,
and other common elements. Teams of student would then meet with WCLS staff at
WCLS libraries to video staff talking about interesting books and other library
materials. Good lighting and sound quality will be emphasized. By the end of 2017,
students will have produced a minimum of six video booktalks and will have posted
them on WCLS's website, Youtube channel, and other online outlets.

Project Evolution

In its initial iteration, we considered audio podcasts in addition to or instead
of videos. Once we determined that WWU has a new Digital Media Center with
video recording studio, we began focusing on the video aspect.

At one point, we thought about having students write the scripts for the
booktalks and serve as the "talent". The students would select books that appealed
to them and the resulting videos would be aimed at a college-age audience with the
goal of encouraging recreational reading of public library materials. However, this
approach requires a lot of effort on the students' part, and does not serve the
purpose of featuring WCLS staff and emphasizing how friendly and knowledgeable
our staff are about books. After speaking with Professor Gosen, we agreed that it
would be helpful to keep the project more limited in scope to allow students to focus
on video production skills within the semester time-frame.

WCLS staff regularly initiate projects using a Project Management
framework, and we actually used this project as a model during Project
Management training for new staff this February. Ideally, all key partners
participate in a project's initiation, and in a perfect world we would include
Professor Gosen and perhaps representatives from each student workgroup on our
project team. However, this process can be very time-consuming, and coordinating
staff schedules with academic schedules adds a layer of difficulty. It quickly became

evident that having one point person from WCLS (me) and one from WWU (Professor Gosen) would be the simplest, most direct way to go.

Lessons Learned Regarding Campus-Community Collaboration

1) Start making contacts early. Everyone is as busy as you are, so the more advance notice, the better.

2) Academic calendars and syllabi are often set months in advance, so plan accordingly. Don't be dismayed if your project is delayed until a new semester can begin.

3) Make sure that your project can be completed by students in one semester, as most courses do not continue for a second term.

4) For the collaboration to work, the community partner needs to make it as simple as possible for the campus partner to participate. Less is more!

5) With your partner, develop a goal statement using the SMART framework: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely. Write it in the form of an end statement – what will have been achieved when the goal has been met.

6) Be flexible; the idea you had originally may not be the one you wind up doing. Some of the fun is in working out a project that meets both partners' needs.

7) Having your project be an actual class assignment (instead of optional, extra credit or extra curricular) will maximize faculty involvement and student commitment.

8) Select a project that would be "nice to have" not "essential" in case it doesn't come together in time.

9) Keep detailed notes about what you agreed upon with your partner, and specifics about the project, so you can replicate it in future terms if it goes well.

10) Have fun; projects like these keep work interesting and fulfilling. Community partners are getting great work from college students, and the reward of knowing they contributed to students' learning experience. Campus partners gain community champions and a greater understanding of their community and the satisfaction of doing useful work in real-life applications.