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VIDEO MAGIC: STUDENT FILMMAKING WITH GOPROS

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INTRODUCTION

Group presentations are a common pedagogical tool for students to report research results in a collaborative way. These often take the form of PowerPoint slides, but this project takes a different direction: giving student teams in a Fall 2014 semester-long information fluency course the opportunity to report on the results of their research through video production.

One of the principal findings of a Project Information Literacy report (Head, 2012) revolves around the social side of research. The research study asked about the information fluency skills employers look for in recent college grades, and found that employers "expected and needed more traditional research competencies, such as…picking up the telephone and interpreting research results with team members." In this project, students practice social forms of research and reflection. They share and discuss their findings with team members, collect research information, and share their findings and process through the creation of videos.

The purchase of 10 GoPro cameras, a wide variety of mounts, and software was made possible through a campus-specific Scholarship of Teaching Learning Grant at the California Maritime Academy. In addition to being used by 23 students in the information fluency course (*LIB 100: Information Fluency in the Digital World*), these materials have been added to the library's circulating collection and are used by students, faculty and staff for assignments in other courses as well as personal use and a new student film contest.

IDEAS AND INPUT

The seed of the idea for the video assignment came from a conversation I had with a student working in the library. She was discussing the lackluster group presentations in one of her classes, and lamenting that they didn't have the opportunity to create videos instead. Since one of my goals for the LIB 100 course is effective communication in a variety of formats, I

thought that branching out into video production would be a logical next step. As recording screens are becoming ubiquitous our students will need to know how to present themselves well on a screen. They will most likely encounter an interview process that requires a Skype interview, for example. Our students have made Wikipedia articles, comics, annotated maps, Excel charts, presentation slides, and infographics—why not videos?

Before embarking on this project, I solicited input and recommendations from a variety of sources. These included posts to the ILI listserv, a literature review, and direct contact with libraries that have A/V lending programs with GoPro cameras. Responses to the ILI list included several suggestions which focused on four main areas. First, promoting groups to carry out projects, distribute the work of potentially intimidating assignments, and share individual expertise among groups. In addition, scaffolding was highlighted as an ideal assignment structure to assist students through the various stages required of this type of project. I also received suggestions to keep the requirements short and simple, in order to avoid overloading the students with too many elements to track at once. Finally, there were pragmatic considerations about file size and methods of "turning in" the files, since video files are so much larger than documents or presentations. Several people posted suggested links to library guides related to media projects; you can find a list of recommendations from the ILI list at the end of this article.

Articles are available from many disciplines about the use of video creation assignments in the classroom, and I found articles from the perspective of composition and business courses to be particularly helpful. Baepler & Reynolds (2014) discuss the "transmedia navigation" and I found their ideas around peer review to be particularly helpful. I share the view of Commander, Ward, and Zabrucky (2012) that "instructors want to move beyond merely teaching theories to creating opportunities where theoretical knowledge actually transforms practice" (p.395). Schultz & Quinn (2014) report on their experience using video assignments in the classroom, stating

that "student-produced video assignments…develop their skills in critical thinking, research and data gathering, organization and management of teams in an active and collaborative problem-solving process, and visualization and interpretation of situations and potential solutions" (p. 239).

During the LOEX 2015 conference, participants discussed additional ways to use GoPro cameras for library projects or collaborations. These suggestions included collaborating with film, theater, music or graphic design departments to make campus promotional videos, or having librarians film first-person library promotional videos. Other suggestions were to have a contest or assignment illustrating the research process, or have students record themselves in their favorite study spaces with an explanation of the compelling features of the spot. Other participants recommended using videos as a way for students to introduce themselves to a class or group, or crowdsourcing responses to a question from students across campus by sending out a group with cameras. Or: Drone tour of the library! The notes from our discussion are available at http://padlet.com/mhanson8/loex2015gopro.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Using input from various sources, I assigned a fairly simple group project with the goal that it would reinforce information literacy concepts already covered in class. Students worked in groups of 3-4, each group producing a short film between 1-2 minutes in the style of a Public Service Announcement. Each group selected a topic related to a concept we had covered in a previous week, with a hypothetical audience of future students who need supplementary information to add to in-class lectures (the best videos will be used in future semesters to reinforce concepts). Students had the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of a topic by putting it in their own words and teaching future students about the topic.

The assignment included several steps and deadlines. Initially, students formed groups and selected their topics from a list of possibilities. Each group developed a draft script or outline, and then met with me for consultation on their concept and plan. We discussed the areas of responsibility required within each group and team members identified their intended role in the production. The video production process took place outside of class, with more experienced team members leading the editing process. We did not have dedicated class time set aside for instruction related to video recording or editing. Instead, I provided supplementary materials and offered individual office hours for guidance or training. Groups uploaded their films to YouTube or Vimeo, and submitted their assignment by sending me the link to their video. We held a screening day during one of our class sessions, and a member from each group introduced their videos and took questions and constructive criticism afterward. During the screening time, the rest of the class used a peer evaluation rubric to provide feedback about their fellow classmate's work. Finally, students were required to complete a brief overview paper in which they detailed the role they played in the production of their group's video and discussed the purpose and goals of the film.

Topics

Each group was able to select their topic from a list of nine possible themes (Citation, Plagiarism, Cycle of Publication, Scholarly vs. Popular Sources, Advanced Google Searching, Website Evaluation, News Research, Controlled Vocabulary, and Peer Review). The class broke into six teams and selected topics from the following list: Plagiarism, Cycle of Publication, Scholarly vs. Popular Sources, Advanced Google Searching, Website Evaluation, and News Research.

In the span of a 1-2 minute video it is difficult to convey extensive detail and nuance, so the videos primarily focused on fairly simple overview treatments of their topics, sometimes relying on binary arguments. Several of the videos made successful use of humor, and a few also included allusions to popular culture references. Links to sample videos are available with my LOEX presentation materials at http://goo.gl/ylcTsL.

Evaluation

Students were graded on a variety of criteria, including the group work of their initial script/outline and the final video, and the individual work of their overview paper and participation in the peer evaluation during our film screening day. I adapted a rubric for the assignment which performed double duty as peer evaluation and the basis of my grading of the final video projects. The rubric (Appendix A) was based on materials from AAC&U and ReadWriteThink. The original rubrics were focused on oral presentations, and I adapted them for use on a recorded video assessment. The overall class average score for all elements of the assignment was 82%. One benefit for instructors who assign video assignments is that the students may really take advantage of the creativity afforded them by this medium, which means that grading can be much more enjoyable.

To evaluate the assignment, I primarily relied on a survey that students completed regarding their experience with the assignment. A selection of a few survey question responses are provided below.

As you can see from the responses in Figure 1, students had a variety of experience with creating videos before the assignment. Most students had at least some familiarity with making videos, but a few (4 of the 23 responses) were complete novices, and 5 reported that they had an extensive background with video production.

Figure 2 represents students' self-reported preference for oral presentations or video assignments, which was fairly mixed and inconclusive. Most students (64%) reported that they have no preference, while oral presentations and video assignments each had a small group of student fans (8 students, or 36%, stated that they prefer one type of assignment over the other).

Figure 1: Prior student experience creating videos

Before the Video Assignment for LIB100, what level of experience did you have in creating videos?		
Response	**Average**	**Total**
No experience	17%	4
A little bit of experience	61%	14
Amateur filmmaker	22%	5

In Figure 3 you can see students' self-perception of their knowledge on their video topic. Most students (13 students, or 62%) reported that they did not feel that making the video increased their level of understanding regarding their video topic. 8 of the respondents (or 38%) felt like they knew more about the topic after their video assignment. None of the students reported that they knew *less* about the topic after the assignment. The responses to this question are somewhat disheartening, and definitely make me want to improve the assignment as well as assessment measures of learning outcomes related to the assignment. Although the self-report survey gave me some feedback about students' experience with the assignment, it didn't give me solid data about students' improved retention of material due to the assignment.

The survey also provided me with feedback that I can use in future versions of this assignment. I asked a couple of open-ended questions about their experience with the assignment, and students were able to provide suggestions that will help inform changes to the assignment. When asked *why* they prefer one type of assignment (presentation vs. video), one student responded: "Since I am a terrible public speaker, it was easier for me to be in the video. Also because it was our own video we were able to be creative and have fun with it." Another student pointed out that "Video presentations have their merits, such as they are generally more entertaining and engaging, yet they tend to be more time consuming than oral presentations."
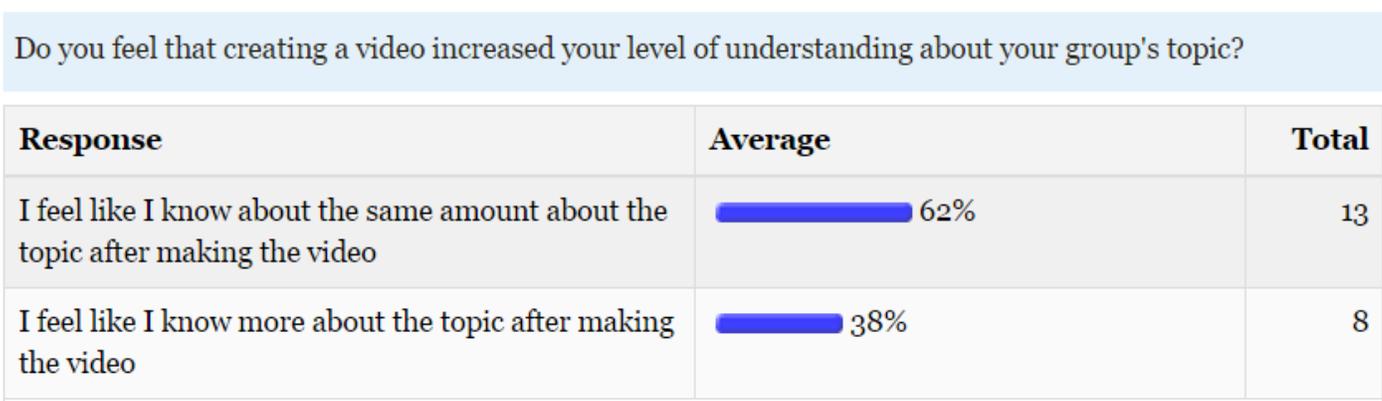
In response to a general question asking for suggestions/feedback, some students replied that the group work sometimes led to uneven division of labor, while other students complained about the timeline overlap with another assignment. I wanted to give students plenty of time to complete the video assignment, so I scaffolded the various elements of the assignment over the course of a few weeks. During that time I had another short assignment due, so in the future I can plan the schedule a bit better without overlapping.

Figure 2: Preference of oral presentations vs. video assignment

In comparison to oral presentation assignments for other classes, how did you feel about the Video Assignment?		
Response	**Average**	**Total**
I prefer oral presentations	18%	4
I like both types of assignments equally	64%	14
I prefer making a video	18%	4

Figure 3: Self-perception of topic comprehension

Do you feel that creating a video increased your level of understanding about your group's topic?		
Response	**Average**	**Total**
I feel like I know about the same amount about the topic after making the video	62%	13
I feel like I know more about the topic after making the video	38%	8

Future Directions

During the course of the semester and after, I've had a few ideas for different directions for a video assignment. I'd like to focus more on the social side of research, and perhaps have students conduct interviews of other students around campus. These "man-on-the-street" interview videos could focus on research habits or other related topics. Another idea is for the students to create their own personal research "diary" or narrative of their typical research practices. I would also like to have students interview an "expert" by finding someone who is knowledgeable about their research topic and developing a brief, sit-down interview with them. Logistically I'd like to scaffold the assignment a bit differently and spend more time in class on the video production process. One step of that is a plan to use a comic assignment already in our syllabus to create storyboards for the videos.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

In addition to using the GoPro cameras for the LIB100 course, other faculty on campus have assigned videos to their students, our library has incorporated the cameras into the library collection with a lending program, and we started a student film contest in Spring 2015. Faculty members in the Business and the Engineering departments have assigned their students video projects, and some of those projects were completed with the library's GoPro cameras. Discussing those assignments with other faculty has helped shape my own video assignment, and I'll be leading a workshop in Fall 2015 for faculty who want to incorporate video assignments into their courses. Collaborating and sharing ideas about the use of our GoPro collection across departments has helped place the library at the center of this conversation.

Lending Program

We used the Fall 2014 semester as a pilot project with the GoPro cameras, only lending them to students in the LIB100 course. In Spring 2015 students, faculty and staff from across campus were able to borrow one of our ten cameras or a wide variety of mounts, and use the video editing software on the library computers. While developing the policies of our equipment lending program, I found the assistance and guidance of other libraries very valuable. Cal Poly Library shared a template for equipment tags to place on each of the items to clearly label replacement costs and loan policies. The University of Delaware shared a parts "placemat" that we use to identify all the small parts that need to be returned upon check-in, and Cornell University shared their checkout form which we adapted for use with our students.

The GoPro lending program has been very popular on our campus, and most of our equipment is "sold out" over the weekends. It has raised the visibility of the library on campus and increased the goodwill felt toward our department. We even sent some of the cameras overseas on our campus training ship this summer!

Student Film Contest

The library has collaborated with the Culture & Communication Department for two years to put on a Maritime Film Series, and in Spring 2015 we added a student film contest to the festivities. I spearheaded the contest organization, and we got inspiration and helpful tips from Cal Poly Library. Students submitted original films shorter than 10 minutes on any topic, and a panel of students, faculty and staff evaluated the films and selected four winners, which were screened before the feature films during the film series events. This was another great opportunity to promote the library's GoPro video camera and mount collection, which students were welcome to use for their film production. Links to the first year's winning films are available at http://goo.gl/ylcTsL.

CONCLUSION

Video assignments are a great opportunity to engage students with a fun and challenging experience. The library can get involved with video creation by loaning equipment, collaborating with faculty and other campus departments on assignments and film contests, and assigning videos in

information literacy courses. GoPro cameras provide unique benefits and considerations, and I encourage your library to try them out! In the spirit of our sharing profession, please feel free to contact me with any questions.

REFERENCES

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SUGGESTED GUIDES & TUTORIALS (COMPILED FROM ILI LIST)

Multimedia Literacy LibGuide at University of Delaware: http://guides.lib.udel.edu/multimedia

Media Projects at Dartmouth: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~videoprojects/wp

Instructor's Guide to Media Activities at Penn State: http://mediacommons.psu.edu/faculty/instructors-guide-to-media-activities

Digital Storytelling Tutorial at University of Richmond: http://learndst.richmond.edu/for-teachers

The Grammar Mission at Leeward Community College: https://sites.google.com/a/hawaii.edu/grammar-mission/home

REMIX: Digital Literacy Resource Portal at Notre Dame: https://remix.nd.edu

Educational Uses of Digital Storytelling at University of Houston: http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/index.cfm

Creating a Video for a Class Assignment at Whitman University: http://www.whitman.edu/content/wcts/support/advanced/video-basics

LIB100 Video Assignment Peer Evaluation Rubric

Video Topic: _____ My Name: _____

	4—Excellent	3—Good	2—Fair	1—Needs Improvement
Content	Provides clear purpose and subject	Has somewhat clear purpose and subject	Attempts to define purpose and subject	Does not clearly define subject and purpose
Coherence & Organization	Student presents information in logical, interesting sequence which audience can follow.	Student presents information in logical sequence which audience can follow.	Audience has difficulty following presentation because student jumps around.	Audience cannot understand presentation because there is no sequence of information.
Enthusiasm	Demonstrates strong enthusiasm about topic during entire presentation	Shows some enthusiastic feelings about topic	Shows little or mixed feelings about the topic being presented	Shows no interest in topic presented
Audience Awareness	Significantly increases audience understanding and knowledge of topic; convinces an audience to recognize the validity and importance of the subject	Raises audience understanding and awareness of most points	Raises audience understanding and knowledge of some points	Fails to increase audience understanding of knowledge of topic
Supporting Material	A variety of types of supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that significantly supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that generally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that partially supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.	Insufficient supporting materials (explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, quotations from relevant authorities) make reference to information or analysis that minimally supports the presentation or establishes the presenter's credibility/authority on the topic.
Central Message	Central message is compelling (precisely stated, appropriately repeated, memorable, and strongly supported.)	Central message is clear and consistent with the supporting material.	Central message is basically understandable but is not often repeated and is not memorable.	Central message can be deduced, but is not explicitly stated in the presentation.

Rubric adapted from AAC&U and ReadWriteThink by Margot Hanson, California Maritime Academy