Value in Digital Humanities:
Assessing Student Learning from Library Internships

Carly Marino, Special Collections Librarian, Humboldt State University

Sarah Fay Philips, Coordinator of Instruction and Reference, Humboldt State University

Abstract

Although digital humanities projects are discussed at length within the academic library professional literature, there is a gap in research that assesses the value of these projects. By designing a library internship using the *ACRL Framework for Information Literacy* the researchers are able to assess and articulate what students learn while creating digital humanities projects. This paper will discuss the design and creation of an assessment rubric and present a holistic approach for demonstrating the value of library internships.

Introduction

Digital humanities projects are an increasingly prevalent feature of the 21st century academic library. Faculty and campus administrators can recognize the value of these projects as a way to enhance student learning with evidence of creative student research. Digital humanities projects combine the high impact practices of service learning, collaborative projects, and undergraduate research with the production of digital exhibits that promote the university and community. In a climate of outcomes-based assessment and data-driven decisions, libraries can demonstrate their contribution to the production of quality graduates with assessment of digital humanities projects.

Our paper grounds a digital humanities initiative in the new ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (Framework)* and assesses the impact on student learning outcomes with the *Framework*. Using an internship program in the Humboldt State University (HSU) Library's Special Collections as a case study, we will explore how students constructed meaning and knowledge as they created digital exhibits. The *Framework* defines metaliteracy as the "vision of information literacy as an overarching set of abilities in which students are consumers and creators of information who can participate successfully in collaborative spaces". By engaging interns in the process of metaliteracy the researchers were able to observe how the students demonstrated their understanding and thoughtfully applied their new knowledge, skills and habits of mind in the context of the internship.

Project Description

Humboldt State University (HSU) is a public institution and part of the 23-campus California State University system. Located in Arcata, California the school is home to 8,700 students with 48 undergraduate programs and 12 graduate programs. In this paper, we studied four undergraduate interns in the University Library Special Collections during fall 2015 semester:

- Half arrived as first-time undergraduates at HSU
- Half transferred to HSU with upper division standing
- Half female
- Half first-generation college attendees in their families
- Three self-identified as underrepresented minorities, one declined to state
- One Anthropology major, two History majors, one English major
- One sophomore standing, one junior standing, two senior standing

Interns enrolled in an academic department's internship or independent study course for two units. Each course unit is the equivalent of 45 hours. This study (HSU IRB # 15-020) is a two year project currently in its first year. In this paper we will discuss assessing two assignments the interns completed and how it enhanced our opportunity to communicate the value of the internship and the digital humanities projects the interns created.

Figure 1: Structure of Internship

Over 13 weeks, the interns researched primary source material in the Special Collections and worked together as a team to develop an online exhibit on a local theme. During the semester, librarians provided instruction to ground students in the research process, copyright, and metadata using the *Framework* as the premise for the curriculum design. During the semester the interns were introduced to a concept, such as information creation, and were provided opportunities to develop the skill by applying what they learned in hands-on projects in the Special Collections. The intern's final product, a

digital exhibit created in Omeka, empowered students to be creators and collaborators rather than passive consumers of information.

We gathered evidence of how students demonstrated their understanding and thoughtfully applied their new knowledge in multiple ways: two exhibit analysis assignments (one at the beginning and one at the end of the internship), the digital humanities project the student created, observation by librarians and reflection writing throughout the Internship. At the start of the semester, students completed an assignment (Appendix 1) to analyze a digital exhibit created by a library or museum that used the platform Omeka.net. At the end of the semester, students completed the same exhibit analysis assignment for a different digital exhibit. The questions in the exhibit analysis assignment were designed to address the student learning outcomes (elements) listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Exhibit Assignment Learning Outcomes and Alignment with *Framework*

Element	Student Learning Outcome	Framework Alignment
A	Students will be able to find and select appropriate sources that support or provide related information on the exhibit	Searching as Strategic Exploration
B	Students will accurately identify and evaluate authority and credibility of sources and the exhibit	Authority is Constructed and Contextual
C	Student will be able to evaluate exhibit and identify constructive ways to improve exhibit	Scholarship as Conversation and Research as Inquiry
D	Students will be able to use evaluative criteria to identify the perspective and potential bias of the creator	Scholarship as Conversation Information has Value

We designed a rubric to evaluate the exhibit analysis assignment and identify changes in student learning and potentially identify how or where they crossed thresholds (Appendix 2). The intern's answers to the exhibit analysis assignment were evaluated on four performance levels: Initial or Beginning (0), Developing (1), Skilled (2), and Capstone/Professional (3). We compared the pre and post internship assignments using the rubric to analyze the intern's understanding of information literacy concepts based on the *ACRL Framework*.

In addition, throughout the internship students were asked to post reflection and discussion questions. In this paper, we will focus on assessment of the pre and post

exhibit analysis assignment, but future research will incorporate analysis of their reflection writing, and the digital humanities project.

Results

The student work on the exhibit analysis improved from the beginning of the internship to the end, indicating that all interns made progress grappling with the concepts and thresholds we were introducing. In Appendix 3, we listed each element and indicated pre and post internship results for each student. As demonstrated in Table Two, students demonstrated better knowledge of the Framework competencies based on the rubric.

Table 2: Student Response change, pre and post assignment

	Student A (001)	Student B (002)	Student C (003)	Student D (004)	Total change	Average change
Element A change from pre to post exhibit analysis	+1	+2	-2	+2	+3	+.75
Element B change	+1	+2	0	+1	+4	+1
Element C change	0	+2	+2	0	+4	+1
Element D change	0	+1	0	0	+1	+.25
Total change per student	+2	+7	0	+3		
Average change per student	+.5	+1.75	0	+.75		

Discussion

The exhibit analysis is one way for students to articulate their understanding of how authority is constructed and contextual. Students have to consider the context in which the information will be used. For example, the exhibit *Humboldt Hindsight is 2020* (https://homeboldt.omeka.net/) interns considered their audience, the incoming class of 2020, and their own positionality as an authority, and in doing so recognize different types of authority. Students must consider appropriate sources for audience, and also determine the intended purpose of the exhibit in order to curate the exhibit.

The exhibit analysis assignment and rubric are just one component of this study and multiple points of evaluation are needed. The researchers are refining the internship to include multiple points of assessment including: discussion questions, exhibit analysis assignment, exhibit evaluation, and peer review exercises. The researchers are also developing a rubric for evaluating the digital humanities projects and digital exhibits interns created. Anecdotal observation and peer review exercises are also incorporated into this study. The HSU Library Scholar Intern program is growing, the researchers are currently working with seven interns and the project will continue in the summer 2016, fall 2016 and spring 2017 semesters.

Internships provide learning opportunities that align with the Framework. In developing this project we were motivated to create a constructivist learning environment where learners would be inspired by active engagement, authentic problem solving, critical thinking and knowledge creation. The presenters are dedicated to assessing higher-level thinking skills and seeing how the learner applies their knowledge in a real-world situation. This authentic and integrated performance assessment focuses on campus learning outcomes and help the presenters establish a clear picture of the University Library and librarians' contribution to student learning.

Appendix 1: Exhibit Analysis Assignment

You are newly hired as an assistant in a museum, and you are asked to step in to lead an exhibit tour. Examine the [website name and link] and answer the following questions as you prepare the presentation. If you don't know the answer, make a best guess.

1. Look at all pages included in the exhibit. What do you think the theme of the exhibit is?
   a. Why do you think that? What is your evidence?
   b. Who is the intended audience?
2. What resources were used to create the exhibit?
   a. Are authoritative sources used? How do you know?
   b. Are credible sources used? How do you know?
3. Find additional supporting or contradictory information about the exhibit topic.
   a. Where did you look for more information?
   b. What did you find that surprised you?
   c. What did you not find?
4. Is the creator of this exhibit an authority? Why do you think that? What is your evidence?
   a. What perspectives other than the exhibit creator are included?
   b. What other perspectives could be included?
5. What is the most interesting part of the exhibit?
6. What could be improved?
7. What have you learned from examining this exhibit?

Appendix 2: Exhibit Analysis Rubric

Special Collections Student Intern Assessment of Learning

Evaluation of Online Exhibit

Element	SLO	Performance Level: Initial or Beginning (0)	Performance Level: Developing (1)	Performance Level: Skilled (2)	Performance Level: Capstone/ Professional (3)
A	Students will be able to find and select appropriate sources that support or	Uses open web and selects poor quality sources. Is not able to	Uses open web and selects quality sources. Uses Library resources but	Uses appropriate level and good quality Library resources (from the catalog, Articles+,	Used provided bibliography AND (appropriate level and good quality Library resources

	provide related information on the exhibit	identify additional information on the topic	selects irrelevant or inappropriate sources	databases, etc.) OR Used provided bibliography	OR appropriate and good quality resources from the Open Web)
B	Students will accurately identify and evaluate authority and credibility of sources and the exhibit	Student makes no effort to evaluate for authority or credibility or back up reasons	Student attempts to use evaluative criteria, but does so inaccurately or incorrectly or inconsistently	Uses evaluative criteria to provide a limited or superficial explanation of authority or credibility	Uses accurate evaluative criteria to provide in-depth explanation of rationale for authority or credibility.
C	Student will be able to evaluate exhibit and identify constructive ways to improve exhibit	Student makes no effort to identify ways to improve the exhibit	Student attempts to use superficial description (more/less) OR incorrectly identifies improvements	Uses evaluative criteria to provide limited and basic suggestions for improvement	Uses accurate evaluation of missing elements and gaps in research to identify improvements
D	Students will be able to use evaluative criteria to identify the perspective and potential bias of the creator	Student makes no effort to evaluate for bias or back up reasons`	Student attempts to use evaluative criteria, but does so inaccurately or incorrectly	Uses evaluative criteria to provide a limited or superficial explanation for bias	Uses accurate evaluative criteria to provide in-depth explanation of rationale for bias.

Appendix 3: Pre and Post Exhibit Analysis Test Results

	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D
Pre Test Element A	1	1	2	1
Post Test Element A	2	3	0	3
Element A Change	+1	+2	-2	+2
Pre Test Element B	1	1	1	2
Post Test Element B	2	3	1	3
Element B Change	+1	+2	0	+1
Pre Test Element C	1	1	0	3
Post Test Element C	1	3	2	3
Element C Change	0	+2	+2	0
Pre Test Element D	1	2	2	3
Post Test Element D	1	3	2	3
Element D Change	0	+1	0	0

References and Resources:

Bay, J. (2006). Preparing undergraduates for careers: An argument for the internship Practicum. *College English*, 134-141.

Blau, G. , & Snell, C. (2013). Understanding undergraduate professional development engagement and its impact. *College Student Journal*, 47(4), 689-702.

Dahl, C. (2011). Supervising academic library internships for non-LIS undergraduates. *Library Management,* 32(67), 408-418.

Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education | Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL). (n.d.). Retrieved May 24, 2016, from http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework

Kelly, K. , Hoelscher, C. , & Gauder, H. (2014). Results for resumes: Managing undergraduate library interns. *Library Leadership & Management (Online)*, *28*(4),

Moore, D. T. (2013). Engaged Learning in the Academy: Challenges and Possibilities. Palgrave Macmillan.

O'Neill, N. (2010). Internships as a high-impact practice: Some reflections on quality. *Peer Review*, 12(4), 4-9.

Pacios, A. R. (2013). Assessment of the Practicum by Students from the Perspective of the Induction Process. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, *54*(3), 191.

Sestrick, T., & Terjesen, L. (2014). Changing lives, one note at a time: Library internships for undergraduate students. *Pennsylvania Libraries: Research & Practice*, *2*(1), 38-47.

Wawrzynski, M. , & Baldwin, R. (2014). Promoting high impact student learning: Connecting key components of the collegiate experience. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2014(165), 51-62.