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A Storied Tale:
Melding Digital Storytelling, Service-learning, and Digital and Information Literacy Skills for Pre-Service Teachers

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THE ACTIVITY

Description: This chapter explores how an education librarian partnered with an elementary education faculty member at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) to facilitate digital storytelling-based service-learning in an Introduction to Children’s Literature course for pre-service elementary teachers. The librarian supported this course and its service-learning component by collaborating with the faculty member on assignment design and via strategic library instructional support for the digital storytelling service-learning projects assigned. Their long-term goals included instilling competence and confidence in students regarding their own digital and information literacy skills and empowering them to take these skills forward into the field to use in the classroom and share with future K-12 students. Also important was the development of the skill of recognizing school librarians as ideal and strategic partners in information literacy instruction and technology-based pedagogy.

The service-learning projects done by EKU’s children’s literature students required them to create digital stories with some kind of an impact in the local community. Over the course of several semesters, they included life story video projects for local elderly nursing home residents, horse story video projects about
and for use by the Kentucky Horse Park and Central Kentucky Riding for Hope, and video projects about—and for use by—various local historical sites and organizations.

**Getting Started:** Cultivating meaningful partnerships with faculty is essential in setting up opportunities for academic service-learning. In spring 2012, as a newly minted academic librarian, I was approached by an elementary education faculty member about integrating digital storytelling into her course. The instructors for LIB 301, Children’s Literature, were interested in shaking up their assignments and incorporating some technology-based projects and goals into their students’ learning. They thought the library could support these goals. Though I didn’t know much about digital storytelling at the time, I was eager to please, willing to learn, and wanted to help assist one particular instructor’s students with the development of digital book talks, their first digital storytelling assignments. We decided we would learn together, and it was the beginning of a fruitful partnership involving digital storytelling, education students, and the library.

In fall 2012, my College of Education colleague invited me to a meeting with a contact of hers at the Kentucky Horse Park in nearby Lexington, Kentucky, about the possibility of having our students apply their digital storytelling skills to a real-world project there in the park. This resulted in our first collaboration with a third-party organization and marked the beginning of the service-learning era of the Children’s Literature course. It was at this point that the goal of their digital storytelling assignments became community-focused rather than specifically book-focused.

That fall, the LIB 301S students assembled into groups, traveled to the Kentucky Horse Park, met, photographed, and filmed some of the equine residents of the park while interviewing their handlers, and then created biographical digital stories starring the horses. Their digital stories, which were geared toward children and highlighted facts about horses, then became digital learning resources for the Kentucky Horse Park to use to educate their young visitors. At the time, the videos were specifically incorporated into the exhibits at the Kentucky Horse Park’s Children’s Barn; visitors could use a QR code posted on a horse’s stall to view the digital story about that horse. Finally, students created a website using Weebly to display their finished projects: http://horseytales.weebly.com/index.html.

Over time, student projects became more complex and varied. Eventually, the course officially became a service-learning course with an “S” designation. After the students had told all the horses’ stories and could do no more at the Kentucky Horse Park, my faculty partner and I looked into other local horse-related organizations (this being Kentucky), continuing our work for a few semesters at another organization called Central Kentucky Riding for Hope (CKRH), located in Georgetown, Kentucky. According to their website, CKRH is “dedicated to enriching the community by improving the quality of life and the health of children and adults with special physical, cognitive, emotional and social needs.
through therapeutic activities with the horse.” At CKRH, students were tasked with creating videos that the organization could use to explain and promote what they do, particularly to school-age children, bringing awareness to their organization as well as greater understanding for people with special needs. From that collaboration, our service-learning students produced videos like this one, titled “Dallas the Cowboy” (https://safeshare.tv/x/HMKrhlQwEW), in which students told the story of a young CKRH client from the perspective of his CKRH therapy horse, Kyky.

Each subsequent semester thereafter, the projects have changed and diversified. In spring 2014, groups of EKU students were assigned an elderly resident of Richmond, Kentucky’s McCready Manor and directed to tell that person’s life story as a digital story. The culminating event of that semester was a “red carpet” premiere in which the students debuted their videos for the residents and their families, many of whom came from out of state. That night, between fifty and sixty people packed into the room to see their loved ones honored. Copies of the videos on DVD-R and thumb drive were highly requested commodities.

Other ongoing projects since then have included work with local historical sites in Richmond, Kentucky, to create history-related promotional and educational videos. For this project, our students found themselves spending a lot of time in the Special Collections & Archives at EKU Libraries, as they researched local primary sources to incorporate into their videos, another layer of information literacy pedagogy.

**Motivations:** Today’s teachers, a diverse body of individuals with a variety of technological backgrounds and skill sets, often find themselves working from a “digital immigrant” perspective. Even pre-service teachers, who may be classified as digital natives, report “strong positive beliefs in technology, yet moderate confidence and reserved attitude in using technology.” Lei reports that, though they are often viewed as “innovative users of available technology and eager adopters of new technology,” pre-service teachers are also not utilizing digital technology to its fullest advantage, self-report that they do not feel comfortable with or proficient at the use of higher-level technology, let alone with using it pedagogically, strategically, “critically, wisely, or meaningfully,” and are not aware of the scope of its capabilities, particularly those related to the field of education. Similar studies show pre-service teachers struggle with information literacy topics such as locating, evaluating, and effectively and ethically using and attributing information, particularly for classroom use.

A strategic partnership between the course instructor and myself provided the chance to co-create an authentic, extended, experiential learning opportunity in which students gained practical, teacher-centered technology and information literacy skills while doing good in their community.

Through service-learning, students would be able to combine service with pedagogically useful technology skills and information literacy skills to produce
digital videos for an “authentic audience.” When students not only create a digital story but create a digital story as an act of service, the authentic audience of those they are serving puts them into true “learn mode.” They are called upon to actively synthesize, create, evaluate, locate, and gather information about their subject, amass and organize content, include only copyright-friendly media, and select appropriate content in order to construct meaning for their potential viewers. As they struggle productively through this process and experiment with what works and what doesn’t, the act of creating their digital story forces them to become more comfortable with technology.

Regarding designing assignments that take advantage of the “authentic audience” concept, Burns explains, “One of the reasons we want to establish authentic audiences for students is so real people can view and interact with the projects students create. We want to take student work out of a pile of papers (or a hidden digital folder) and place it in the real world. Because when we establish authentic audiences for students, they can see the purpose for their work.” Because of this concept of “authentic audience,” it is easy to see why digital storytelling is such a perfect match for service-learning.

**THE PEOPLE**

**Library:** Eastern Kentucky University Libraries (EKU Libraries) includes the John Grant Crabbe Main Library, the Elizabeth K. Baker Music Library, and the Business Library. It serves Eastern Kentucky University (EKU), a mid-sized, regional, comprehensive, public university located in Richmond, Kentucky, which offers a variety of undergraduate and graduate degrees taught face-to-face at the main campus or at one of its satellite campuses or online.

EKU Libraries’ Learning Resources Center (LRC) is EKU’s curriculum materials center or education library, located inside the John Grant Crabbe Library. The LRC provides access to materials that are appropriate for use by K-12 students as well as professional materials intended for use by EKU’s pre-service teachers. Our collection includes K-12-appropriate books and manipulatives, teaching materials, puppets, games, puzzles, models, kits, textbooks, and many other items for circulation to students, faculty, and staff. The LRC also facilitates access to the library’s education databases via online research guides, tutorials, help at our service point, and library instruction, typically performed in one or more one-shot sessions by one of two full-time education librarians (of which I am one). The education librarians provide information literacy instruction for education students at all levels on topics such as using the databases to find articles, evaluating information, and selecting appropriate and relevant K-12 books and materials, both online and physical, for classroom use. We strive to make library instruction sessions as focused on the practical as possible while still tackling big-picture,
critical thinking and information literacy concepts relevant to the needs of twenty-first-century teachers.

**Instructors:** LIB 301S: Children’s Literature (with a service-learning component) is taught by an elementary education faculty member in the School of Clinical Educator Preparation, specifically in the Curriculum & Instruction Department. One of two education librarians in EKU Libraries’ Learning Resources Center traditionally provides support for the course. This has typically included multiple library instruction sessions on various topics, in addition to a digital storytelling session, reference help, technology support, and an assignment design consultation each semester. In this consultation, the education librarian meets with the faculty member to re-examine and refine the various course assignments so that they most intentionally and strategically incorporate the librarian and best practices in pre-service teacher information literacy.

**Students:** LIB 301S is required of all elementary education majors and is usually taken sometime between the sophomore and senior year.

**Community Partners:** Each semester, the course instructor for LIB 301S chooses potential community partners based on a variety of factors. These include personal connections, geographical proximity for ease of travel for students, their ability to accommodate large numbers of students coming and going, the applicability of storytelling and digital storytelling to the nature of their mission and needs, and possible curricular connections to K-12 learning for the purposes of modeling future partnerships for teaching students.

The service-learning projects done by EKU’s children’s literature students require them to create digital stories with some kind of an impact in the local community. The course instructor chooses and connects with each community partner prior to the semester to focus and structure the digital storytelling assignment around their legitimate needs. However, for the most part, student groups are required to contact the organization to schedule times to visit and conduct their work.

**Finding and Working with Partners:** In order to initiate and then to sustain a healthy service-learning direction for a course or program, the course instructor and any campus partners must be on the lookout for potential partners and add local contacts to the list of possible community collaborators when the opportunity arises. During a recent semester, after some program changes, the student roster for LIB 301S swelled to four sections with a total of about one hundred students. It can be challenging to always have a nascent project that will accommodate large numbers of students lined up in the pipeline but it is necessary in case a partnership falls through suddenly.

In addition, classes of students may eventually complete a given project, so the prospects for working with that particular community partner will be exhausted and it is necessary to have a new one to replace it. One recommendation for keeping your Rolodex packed with community contacts and fresh project
ideas is to present or speak regularly about your service-learning project at regional academic or service-learning conferences, local relevant events, and any other opportunity that presents itself, specifically mentioning your need for a continuous supply of community participants.

Having three or four concurrent service-learning options for students to choose from also helps project coordinators avoid some of the inevitable logistical pitfalls. It is also important to be transparent about logistical issues with students, as teacher candidates will share the struggle of maintaining a steady stream of possibilities as they embark on future K-12 service-learning projects. Facilitating them in making connections in their community now via service-learning is a great way to ensure that they begin forging these connections early, which should help mitigate this issue.

**Benefits**

**Instructor Benefits:** The new ACRL Framework calls librarians to be information literacy facilitators, advocates, and partners, collaborating more deeply with faculty and mentoring students as they navigate an information environment that is becoming increasingly participatory and less static and hierarchical. Accordingly, librarians must go above and beyond the one-shot model of library instruction by “creating a new cohesive curriculum for information literacy, and in collaborating more extensively with faculty.” Through the intentional, synergistic redesign of instruction, assignments, and courses, librarians will truly and authentically empower students to engage in deep learning about topics in information literacy.

Service-learning provides just such an opportunity for librarians, faculty, and their students to collaborate intentionally for meaningful and engaged learning beyond a single one-hour library instruction session.

The ultimate goal for library instruction in the College of Education, for us, has been to strategically embed library advocacy within our pedagogy. We strive to be “intentional in demonstrating effective pedagogical use of educational technology in a way that cultivates a strong, collegial relationship between teachers and school librarians for years to come,” as “this relationship benefits teachers and librarians, but first and foremost, generations of K-12 students.”

**Student Benefits:** The LRC’s mission is to model both the form and function of the school library for College of Education students. The larger goal is to inculcate pre-service teaching students with a fuller understanding of the purpose of school librarians as both competent K-12 teacher colleagues and teacher support professionals whose expertise is not simply limited to the important but conventional role of student literacy support but also includes command of twenty-first-century learning skills instruction for both K-12 students and their teachers. The continuing expansion of information demands that all individuals
acquire the thinking skills that will enable lifelong learning. Toward this end, AASL’s Standards for the 21st-Century Learner illustrates the ways in which school librarians must “collaborate with others to provide instruction, learning strategies, and practice in using the essential learning skills needed in the 21st century.” Imparting twenty-first-century skills to our pre-service teaching students is necessary for their development as teachers, and modeling such skills is essential for teaching teacher candidates how to use the librarians in their lives most optimally for their professional success and the success of their students.

Guiding students toward metacognitive critical thinking and “productive struggle” in instruction sessions is a tall order when divorced from some sort of meaningful context, which service-learning can provide, as it supplies a dynamic opportunity for faculty and librarians to collaborate toward all of these ideals.

Since quality assignments from the faculty member represent step one in the design of a meaningful learning experience for students, it is the job of librarians, where possible, to liaise and collaborate with faculty members to intelligently and purposefully design assignments (perhaps using the ACRL Framework as a starting point) that lead students to meaningfully self-reflect as they seek, evaluate, and communicate information. From there, we can co-design activities for library instruction sessions that hold special relevance, thanks to the service-learning context.

Digital storytelling, a common assignment for pre-service teaching students and, in turn, for K-12 students, is defined by Heo as “a branch of storytelling that uses digital media resources to tell a story,” on virtually any topic or content area that may be “expressed through art, oral history, creative writing, speaking, photographs, music, news clippings, digital videos, the Web, graphic design, sound engineering, or animation, and thus involves multiple modalities” and which “fosters higher order cognition and helps students with various learning styles by utilizing multimedia technology.” Digital storytelling can take endless shapes and dynamically apply to just about any subject or student age group. For example, it could take the shape of a tutorial in which students explain a concept they have learned about (such as a math concept), a digital show-and-tell or family tree project (social studies), a digital manifestation of a story or poem a student has written or a digital book talk or book trailer (language arts), a digital story that creatively and/or narratively teaches a natural process, such as the water cycle or a historical event (science or social studies, respectively). The pedagogical possibilities are endless.

Learning about digital storytelling tools and their classroom applications boosts self-efficacy in student teachers and helps them think pedagogically with the help of librarians.

**Partner Benefits:** Through the service-learning experience, future teachers (many of whom will practice in their hometown and in their home state of Kentucky) learn about community service organizations in their area and make local connections that they might be able to use again as teachers in their own
classrooms. The whole process is designed to model a service-learning activity, or perhaps simply a field trip, that they might arrange for their own future elementary school students. Service-learning helps EKU’s pre-service teachers build a foundation and a culture of real-world, locally aware, empathy-based pedagogy from which community partners will continue to derive benefits.

**Institutional Benefits:** Incorporating service-learning into LIB 301S has many benefits for Eastern Kentucky University. Service-learning aligns with EKU’s Strategic Plan, specifically Strategic Goal #6, Service to Communities and Region. According to Goal #6, “We will create a culture of outreach and engagement through innovative teaching and scholarship, as well as valuing engagement with our communities and regional partners. By applying our academic and professional expertise to collaborations with community stakeholders, we will improve the quality of life for the communities we serve.”

The plan goes on to state that “engagement in our region allows us to use our skills and resources in collaboration with the community to benefit both the university and our community partners. Our outreach and engagement through enhanced communication and deeper relationships will promote an improved quality of life for all community members” and will help us “bring EKU to our Service Region” so that our Service Region will come to us (6.3). In addition, Strategic Goal 1.2.2 directs that we will “focus on involving students in decision-making, research, and creative activities with faculty, scholarship, service-learning, international education, co-op, and internships.” Such activities provide meaningful learning experiences for students so that they are more likely to be retained, to graduate, and, in turn, garner positive and productive attention for the university.

**THE PROCESS**

**Expected Learning Outcomes**

No matter the specific service-learning application, general expected learning outcomes for completing digital storytelling projects in support of students’ service-learning goals included the following (created as a result of collaboration between the faculty member teaching the course and myself):

- Critical thinking, metacognition, and pedagogy:
  - Students will engage in metacognitive and critical thinking as they create a digital story to engage an authentic audience.
  - Students will understand and extrapolate the pedagogical value of digital storytelling in their future K-12 classroom.
  - Students will understand and extrapolate the pedagogical value of service-learning in their K-12 classroom.
  - Students will reflect metacognitively upon the service-learning and digital storytelling experience via reflective journal entries.
• Productive struggle:
  o Students will learn the necessity of keeping up with educational technology, which is constantly changing.
  o Students will become more comfortable with technology but, more importantly, with the feeling of powering through the discomfort associated with productive technology struggle, thus fostering a “growth mindset” around technology.17
  o Students will learn to solve problems, particularly technological problems that will inevitably arise.
  o Students will learn coping skills for problem-solving.
  o Students will understand how, when, and whom to ask for help (professor, librarian, community partner) as they productively struggle with their digital storytelling assignment.

• Building connections and community:
  o Students will build valuable local connections with community organizations which they can draw upon for their own K-12 service-learning endeavors in the future if they teach in the area.
  o Students will learn how to work effectively and efficiently as a team within their groups.
  o Students will learn about civic responsibility.
  o Students will gain insight into global understanding, empathy, and citizenship.

• Information literacy/digital literacy/technology literacy:
  o Students will select, evaluate, and implement appropriate information resources, technology, and tools.
  o Students will demonstrate a concern for selecting appropriate materials (including digital tools) that meet the needs of children with diverse cultural backgrounds.
  o Students will understand the valuable role school librarians have as technology and information literacy support professionals for K-12 teachers.
  o Students will synthesize and communicate knowledge via their digital story product and will understand the value of the digital story as a tool for their own future K-12 students to communicate their knowledge.
  o Students will learn how to use information ethically as they gather appropriate multimedia from the web (photos, music, video, etc.) to synthesize with media they create themselves while interviewing and interacting with their subjects.
  o Students will form a foundational understanding copyright, particularly in creating digital learning objects such as their digital stories.
Students will begin to understand the importance of digital citizenship and the importance of passing on these lessons to their students, particularly with regard to evaluating, proper sharing, and proper attribution of multimedia materials, specifically using Creative Commons.

- **Research skills:**
  o Students will understand the difference between primary sources and secondary sources, and when and where to use them (in applicable projects), and will gain a foundational understanding of how and why to teach them in the K-12 classroom.
  o Students will understand the valuable role school librarians have as information literacy support professionals for K-12 teachers.

- **Children's literature:**
  o Students will learn and apply the principles of storytelling to the digital story project.
  o Students will understand digital storytelling as a means for promoting literacy through technology (particularly when creating booktalks, etc.).

**Curriculum Materials**

Before students could get out into the “field” and create digital stories about horses, nursing home residents, or local history, they needed some foundational instruction. This included content and experience that would enable them to gain a basic understanding of the technology they could use to craft their work, and concepts such as copyright and general ethical sharing and use of multimedia found on the web for incorporation into their work, as well as general principles of designing aesthetically pleasing, well-made videos, etc. These are concepts that an information-literate individual in the twenty-first century needs to know, and they are concepts that it would be important for these future teachers to impart to their own K-12 students. Listed in the Appendix Materials at the end of the chapter, you will find

- links to Librarian-Created LibGuide and YouTube tutorials on free or cloud-based video editing application(s) and Creative Commons used to walk students through making their videos;
- an assignment description created by the course instructor; and
- a Digital Storytelling Evaluation Rubric
Steps Involved

1. **Library instruction.** Each semester, after students have been given their service-learning/digital storytelling assignment, but before students go out to their service-learning sites, I facilitate a library instruction session designed to give students a foundation in these concepts while simultaneously making a concerted effort to avoid handholding. In fact, I deliberately don’t actually use class time to teach them the “point here, click here” aspects of using free or cloud-based video editing application(s); of their choosing that provide the ability to include a narrative voiceover, music, images and/or video, and a credits slide, the only required elements of the project). Instead, I strategically flip the classroom, using the class Blackboard site (in which I am embedded) to push custom-made YouTube tutorials (included in the Appendix Materials at the end of the chapter) on using free or cloud-based video editing application(s) to create a digital story for them prior to the library instruction session. The value of this is that they can also refer back to the video later when they have technological questions during their actual work process, rather than trying to force students to remember all of it before they have a frame of reference for it. In the session itself, we then engage in more meaningful, abstract thinking about best practices in synthesizing multimedia to create a polished product, and how teaching with digital storytelling benefits them and their students. Typically, we engage in four activities during class time which are built around four questions:

2. Why is digital storytelling a relevant and constructive activity for students? To answer this question, students view a video which demonstrates what digital storytelling looks like in practice in the elementary school classroom, then do a think/pair/share activity wherein they journal about the benefits and skills they see students gaining from engaging in digital storytelling, then share with a partner, and then with the class.

3. What makes for a “good” digital story? To answer this question for themselves, students view digital storytelling examples created by LIB 301S students in previous semesters (approved in advance), then do another think/pair/share activity wherein they journal about improvements they would suggest that the author of the video make, as well as things they found to be effective about the video. These responses usually end up corresponding with the University of Houston’s “The 7 Elements of Digital Storytelling,” which breaks down many of the best practices in creating good digital stories (this page also includes examples and other extremely helpful resources), which I show the students and share with them as a resource which they can refer to as they go through the
process. Such best practices include good grammar and language usage, appropriate pacing, economy of detail, clarity of voice (and not reading from a script), use of an appropriate, meaningful, and copyright-friendly musical soundtrack, and content choice.  

4. What does copyright have to do with all this? Third, I lead students in a discussion about copyright, engaging them in a third think/pair/share about what they think teachers should know about copyright and what role they think copyright might play in their classroom when facilitating multimedia projects or otherwise. This usually leads to a lively full-class discussion as students grapple with ideas about whether they should be allowed to show Disney films in class, etc. We then talk about the role copyright plays in this assignment and why it’s an important skill they and their students might gain from creating digital stories. I follow this up with a demonstration of Creative Commons Search, a site which allows the user to search sites like Google Images, Flickr, Soundcloud, Jamendo, and others for copyright-friendly multimedia to use in projects such as this one. It is imperative that students understand that although Creative Commons (CC) is a good starting point, they still need to take certain steps to find CC licensing information and thus verify and interpret it.  

5. Where do I start on my digital story? Finally, students use class time to begin storyboarding their digital story, identifying relevant copyright-friendly media to potentially use, and brainstorming with their group members about how they might start on the assignment. This gives them dedicated time with me to begin asking questions they have, also, though most often, the questions do not come until they are deep into their work.

Intentionally refraining from coddling students at this point in the process is crucial. It is important for the librarian to give them enough information to get started and contextualize the significance of the assignment, but which will then let them struggle productively as they move into the beginning stages of their work, as this helps contribute to a student growth mindset around technology.

1. Productive struggle/work begins. Students go out to work with their community partners and begin creating their digital story. At this stage, students often express anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed. Typically, students approach me or their instructor and worriedly express self-doubt about having to use technology for a grade. Because the service-learning component of the assignment has, of course, been introduced at this point in the semester, they also tend to declare misgivings about that as well. Having never completed such a multi-faceted, meaningful assignment that also happens to involve technology, students are apprehensive about their ability to do what is asked of them; they are
very much in a “fixed mindset” mode (avoiding challenges and struggles, giving up easily when confronted with obstacles to success, etc.) as they begin to ponder leaving their comfort zones. 

2. **Required librarian meetings.** I usually end the required class session with a plug for our libraries’ Ask Us service, being sure to communicate to them that struggle (technological and otherwise) is inevitable with this assignment, and that it’s okay and even expected. I let them know that it’s okay to feel overwhelmed; when they sit down to work and the questions come, they can seek me out for an appointment, e-mail consultation, or for assignment-related technology assistance. I also make a point of mentioning that everything I do for them is what their future school librarian will do for them when they assign a similar project to their own students. During some semesters, we required students to meet with me about their project at least once during the semester, and I felt that this really helped students and drove home my purpose as a librarian in supporting them.

3. **End-of-semester presentations.** Students present their digital stories to the class. It is kind of like a “red carpet” event; the feeling is very laid-back, and students bring snacks to share. At various points in the history of the assignment, the instructor has had students give peer feedback, and then groups of students may be given a final chance to fix any issues they may be having before they officially turn in their work for the last time. In the past, students have also presented their final videos in a service-learning community-specific setting, such as a red carpet event at the local nursing home, where the videos were shown for the movies’ subjects and copies of the videos were ceremoniously presented to their family members in attendance.

**POST-PROJECT ASSESSMENT**

**Methods of Reflection**

LIB 301S students have been, up to this point, assessed qualitatively and informally on their digital storytelling service-learning projects. A rubric created by the instructor provided a means for scoring their final videos. As mentioned previously, regular, spontaneous reflections in the form of journal entries provided a way for students to formatively assess themselves (and for the instructor to do so as well) and self-monitor throughout the semester. Students were also asked to reflect on their experiences as part of their final examinations. In the future, our goal is to make assessment more formal, evidence-based, and meaningful in order to better gauge the impact that service-learning and digital storytelling are having on the desired learning outcomes.
Post-Project Feedback

Though assessment up to this point has been largely qualitative and informal, student reflections and feedback collected at various points throughout the semester, including the final exam, have shown that students do experience personal transformation in the process of creating their digital stories and participating in service-learning. In their various reflections, including several on their final exams, students were asked questions like, What did you learn? What was a surprise to you? What didn’t surprise you? What three things did you not know about children that you learned? What did you learn about storytelling to children? What did you learn from working with the LRC staff? What tidbits did you take away about how a library runs that will help you in the future? What was the most moving thing that happened to you during your service-learning time? The value of service-learning is______?

Many of the statements made by the students in their resulting reflections reflect the expected learning outcomes:

- Critical thinking, metacognition, and pedagogy:
  - “I learned that children love to be read to. They also love being a part of making something. If you involve them in the process they will learn more. Storytelling with kids is great…. A story can be in many different forms. It can be read aloud to them, in a digital form, or even just in pictures. They will listen and learn any way they can as long as they are engaged.”
  - “Through my service-learning project I have learned that using digital stories and interrelated technology can deeply enhance the impact that my lessons have on my future students.”
  - “In my future classroom I could have my students make their own digital stories to tell either their own story or about a person from history, a person they have made up, a place, and many other topics. They could use them as tools to help other children learn and it could be something they could show their parents or guardians with pride.”

- Productive struggle:
  - “Getting positive feedback from children was really empowering. I was actually surprised at the ending product; I did not realize that putting a digital story together was something that I was able to do. It had me thinking about my future students who may also struggle with their reading; I think that this would be a great way for them to work on their skills in reading, writing, communication, and organization…. I hope to show them that they can create something that is worth being shared with other students, thus empowering them and showing them that they
can succeed in academic [sic] far better than they may have thought."

- "When I first looked at the assignment I was nervous and a little apprehensive. After completing it I was rather proud of how it looked and worked."

- "Doing my digital story was a little frustrating; I had a hard time getting the photos that I wanted. After I finally got some photos I had a lot of fun putting it together, and I found that I could see how it would be more interesting for a student to watch a quick video than read a textbook. The images if paired well could help a student link the images to the information and give them a way to read it more effectively."

- **Building connections and community:**
  - "Based on my service experience and the knowledge that I have gained in LIB 301, I feel that teachers can address community needs in various ways. First of all, teachers can create assignments in which the students will be serving their community. For instance, students could create digital stories or graphic novels on topics concerning their community or state, like we created the stories on the horses."
  - "I think that teachers can use the creativity and abilities of their students to address community needs. Just like we created something that will aid in a better Children’s Barn at the Kentucky Horse Park, a teacher’s students could do anything to help raise awareness of or raise money for anything the community may need."
  - "I learned that the Horse Park had far more to offer to its visitors than just a beautiful view and a chance to see some magnificent horses. There is a lot of information about horses, of course, but there was also a lot of valuable information about Kentucky, history, geology, and people. This gave me a chance to rethink some of the ideas I had for field trips and what I would want my students to take away from them."
  - "The Children’s Barn [at the Kentucky Horse Park] is a very interesting place for children to explore and I was honored to have made something that could have a home there."
  - "As a teacher, I can increase the service-learning components and collaboration in my classroom by providing my students with the opportunity to go visit places and make their own creations."
  - "I feel that by participating in these activities I have learned how to incorporate technology and service-learning into my lessons more easily. I learned how to use software I had never seen before that I can pass on to my students."
• Information literacy/digital literacy/technology literacy:
  o “I was surprised at first because I didn’t know there would be assignments. I thought it was going to be more like a guided tour of the LRC and really getting to know each part of the library and what it can do for you. I know a lot about the LRC and that is a great thing.”
  o “The staff taught me through the assignments. I learned to really use all my resources. In the process of doing the core content assignment I found a way to use it in my Music for Teachers class. It all just started to click in my head.”
  o “I can use the up and coming ways of technology to teach the children and pair it with the old school books. The future is changing and teachers have to learn to adapt to their environment. They need to teach children in the best way they can learn.”
  o “With Heather’s classes, she showed us a variety of ways to do projects. This will come in handy for my own classroom.”
  o “I learned through the EKU LRC that the school librarian can be a great connection to have, and my classroom will benefit by using the library resources.”
  o “I also began to think of the different activities [my students] could do to show what they have learned and ways that they could share their newly learned knowledge with their fellow students, giving them the chance to share their thoughts, and the new information.”
  o “After taking this course, I feel that teachers would benefit immensely from forming a relationship with their public and school libraries. Learn what other teachers or schools are doing, and they could share ideas. The librarian may know of books or websites that fit the teacher’s lesson they are planning. The librarian may learn of books that need to be purchased for the library to make them readily available.”
  o “[The project] is real practice for what is to come…. The most valuable thing I learned is just to seek the resources that are available to me, use the library and the library staff as much as possible, and to provide students [with] first-hand, memorable assignments that will stick with them.”
  o “When I get a teaching position I will definitely need to create a close working relationship with the staff at both my local public library and the school’s library.”
  o “I learned so much throughout this course. The biggest surprise was how easy and effective it is to incorporate technology in the classroom…. It was great working with the LRC staff and having a connection in such a resourceful part of the library. I am now
able to find my way through the LRC and can use its tools like the catalog and professional section to help make me a better teacher candidate.”

- “The library resource personnel within the school I teach at is going to be an asset to me while I work. There are so many great tools and resources that I look forward to using in my classroom.”

- “I will establish a personal relationship with librarians and let them know I am open to their assistance in teaching about books and libraries.”

- “I can ask librarians to visit my classroom, talk to my students, order magazines and books, and help me find resources as well.”

- “The digital booktalk really helped me realize the importance of teaching with technology and how to do that. In my classroom I want to allow my students to explore different ways to present information that interests them and the knowledge I have gained has really allowed me to broaden my ways in doing this.”

**Project Assessment and Reporting Methods**

Though no formal assessment was done, it was clear that as students worked through the process of creating their digital stories for their particular service audiences, they honed lifelong information literacy and digital literacy skills. Over time, they also built up so-called “soft” social-emotional skills (such as empathy, collaboration, time management, etc.) and took advantage of the opportunity to build valuable community connections for their own future K-12 service-learning and information literacy- and digital literacy-related projects. This is demonstrated in the responses given by the students in their post-project reflections (detailed later in the chapter). Finally, the experience modeled important pedagogical strategies for meaningful and authentic service-learning as pre-service teaching students prepare to enter the classroom, including the benefit of collaboration with a school librarian. In the future, we have plans to assess these outcomes more quantifiably.

**Difficulties Encountered**

**Instructor Issues:** For librarians, one of the most difficult hurdles in becoming involved with a service-learning endeavor is simply initiating partnerships with faculty members. For those who teach a for-credit information literacy course, this might not be as much of an issue, but for those of us without regular, sustained ownership over a semester-long, captive group of students, becoming involved with a service-learning project means working closely with faculty members, and often it can take time and effort to establish these partnerships.
Suggestions for actualizing such relationships are similar to typical suggestions and best practices for building faculty-librarian relationships in general. First, use the ACRL Framework as a discussion tool with faculty. As previously stated, getting full value out of the framework requires deep collaboration between faculty and librarians, and service-learning provides such an opportunity. The framework, which is marketable to faculty because of its scholarly language and promotion of a research orientation beyond simple “library skills,” provides an excellent starting point for faculty-librarian conversation and collaboration around information literacy. The framework gives us a common language and common goals that we can all use to productively partner with faculty.

In addition, attending regional, local, and campus professional development gatherings (conferences, workshops, or even department meetings) that are geared toward faculty, particularly when they center around the scholarship of teaching and learning, may present opportunities not only to learn about how you may be able to better serve your faculty in general but may also reveal possibilities for service-learning or digital storytelling-based collaborations with faculty. Most faculty would not automatically think of librarians as partners in service-learning endeavors, as many are unaware of the many facets of information literacy, digital literacy, instructional support, and technology support with which we are capable of furnishing them and their students. Presenting at scholarly functions your faculty will be attending provides a good chance to sell the framework and communicate with faculty about how librarians support student learning, specifically through service-learning, digital storytelling, a combination of the two, or a similar project. Once you have some experience with service-learning or digital storytelling or both, presenting about your work helps spread the word about potential librarian-faculty partnerships of all types and all the potential student benefits thereof. In my experience, word spreads quickly around campus, and the possibilities for joint interdisciplinary projects grow exponentially over time. In addition to working with education students, I have been asked more frequently to provide instruction and consult with faculty about their assignments in departments such as engineering (students made a how-to video for how to build a device they invented to solve a problem) and anthropology (students visiting Peru on a study abroad trip made a video synthesizing what they learned on their trip and how it changed their views).

**Student Issues:** Surprisingly, education students—even traditional students—often show an extraordinary amount of reticence and fear surrounding technology use. Regarding the importance of a positive instructor attitude and with respect to technology in particular, it is crucial not to reflect students’ growing pains or negativity with respect to technology and an unfamiliar learning mode back to them, and that is often easier said than done. It is the librarian’s job (and one to which we are accustomed and which comes naturally to us) to encourage students to ask for help and to always make students feel safe and un-
judged when they seek help. Again, learning how to forge a good relationship with their librarian is especially consequential for education students as we are teaching them how to use library professionals to their maximum advantage as their careers progress.

In addition, librarians and instructors must demonstrate a growth mindset for students. McGuire suggests that all instructors “create a supportive learning environment for ... students by setting a clear positive tone,” making yourself as approachable as possible by sharing personal, humanizing details about yourself whenever possible. She goes on to explain that “because students so often think that we are omniscient automatons placed in their lives to make them feel inferior, why not share past academic struggles with them? Make it clear that you were not always the thinker and scholar that you are today and that you believe they can make a similar journey.... Students want to know that you have the same challenges that they do” and this “immediately relaxes ... students and allows them to focus on learning.”

Community Partner Issues: It can be difficult identifying a community partner who will accommodate the schedules of so many students (sometimes, between all of the sections in a given semester, there have been around one hundred students) descending upon them over the course of the semester. Grouping the students helps with the load for community partners, and it also helps to be honest with them about the kind of undertaking they face by taking on student service-learning. Often, the hassle of dealing with these students can outweigh the potential benefits, so it is good to be open, flexible, understanding, and willing to move on to other partner options if things don’t work out with the organization you would like to work with.

Conclusion

The projects described in this chapter represent one possibility for meaningful and powerful service-learning. It was intentionally constructed to help LIB 301S students forge meaningful community connections that they might draw upon as future elementary school classroom teachers, learn the value of K-12 service-learning, gain valuable, pedagogically-based educational technology skills, become comfortable with the productive struggle of constantly keeping up with new technologies, develop some digital and information literacy skills (both general and education-specific), metacognitively learn about storytelling as a pedagogical tool, and grow their understanding of the purpose of libraries and librarians and their role in supporting teachers and students beyond traditional literacy facilitation. It truly speaks to the effectiveness of service-learning that we were able to utilize it as a means for guiding students toward so many varied student learning outcomes.
APPENDIX MATERIALS

- Links to Librarian-Created YouTube Tutorials and LibGuide
- Assignment Description
- Digital Storytelling Rubric
- Digital Story Images

Links to Librarian-Created YouTube Tutorials and LibGuide

- http://libguides.eku.edu/digitalstorytellingandbooktalking
- http://tiny.cc/lib301creativecommons
- http://tiny.cc/lib301moviemaker

Assignment Description

DIGITAL STORY ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: Create a Digital Story

The following websites will help you to develop a successful digital story. You will also receive instruction from one of the EKU LRC staff using digital storytelling websites and software during a class session. To begin your assignment, I suggest that you search the following website for information.

Your story will be four minutes in length and will be graded on the components of a good digital story. These include images, music, story plot, hook, pacing, voice quality, dramatic question, emotional quality, economy, and point of view.

Steps:

2. Then find, read, and learn about the “7 Elements of Digital Storytelling.” The elements are incorporated into the rubric for this assignment.
3. After learning what the seven elements are, you will need to learn the differences between a digital story and a digital booktalk (use the tabs to find this information).
4. Watch the videos in the About Digital Storytelling box?
5. Watch the How-To Videos located under the How-To Videos tab to learn about copyright and free or cloud-based video editing application(s).
6. View some of the examples from previous students that are located on the page.
7. Next, go to the websites listed on the LibGuide to find copyright-free music and images to use for your digital story.
8. Next, I have attached a storyboard for you to use as a guide for constructing your storyboard: http://tiny.cc/noelstudiostoryboard.

9. You will be using YouTube to share your digital booktalk. Instructions can be found here: http://tiny.cc/lib301youtube.

10. Finally, once you have created your video, you will then post the URL link on Blackboard. Please use as your title last name_first name_title of your digital booktalk.

11. Be sure to save your work in multiple locations. It is technology and it does crash.

12. Happy developing your digital story!

Digital Storytelling Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>ABOVE TARGET</th>
<th>TARGET</th>
<th>TARGET/ PROFICIENT</th>
<th>BELOW TARGET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images</td>
<td>Images create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story. Images may communicate symbolism and/or metaphors.</td>
<td>Images create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches some parts of the story. Images may communicate symbolism and/or metaphors.</td>
<td>An attempt was made to use images to create an atmosphere/tone but needs more work. Image choice is logical.</td>
<td>Little or no attempt to use images to create an appropriate atmosphere/tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 points</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soundtrack – Emotion</td>
<td>Music stirs a rich emotional response that matches the storyline.</td>
<td>Music stirs a rich emotional response that somewhat matches the storyline.</td>
<td>Music is ok and not distracting but it does not add much to the story.</td>
<td>Music is distracting, inappropriate, or was not used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 points</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of presentation</td>
<td>Length of presentation was four minutes.</td>
<td>Length of presentation was three minutes.</td>
<td>Length of presentation was two minutes.</td>
<td>Presentation was less than two minutes long or more than four minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 points</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>ABOVE TARGET</td>
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<tr>
<td>Points</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice – Pacing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 points</td>
<td>The pace (rhythm and voice punctuation) fits the story and helps the audience “get into” the story. Appropriate voice volume.</td>
<td>Occasionally speaks too fast or too slowly for the storyline. The pacing (rhythm and voice punctuation) is relatively engaging for the audience. Good voice volume.</td>
<td>Tries to use pacing (rhythm and voice punctuation) but is often noticeable that the pacing does not fit the storyline. Appropriate voice volume needs attention.</td>
<td>No attempt to match the pace of the storytelling to the storyline or the audience. Appropriate voice volume cannot be heard or is too loud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic question</td>
<td>All questions will be developed and answered completely by the end of the story.</td>
<td>All questions will be developed and answered by the end of the story.</td>
<td>All questions will be somewhat developed and answered by the end of the story.</td>
<td>All questions will not be developed and answered by the end of the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 points</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Content</td>
<td>The content that is addressed or issue speaks to the audience in a very personal, clear, precise, and powerful way.</td>
<td>The content that is addressed or issue speaks to the audience in a personal and clear way.</td>
<td>The content that is addressed or issue somewhat speaks to us in a very personal way.</td>
<td>The content does not speak to us in a personal way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 points</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CATEGORY</td>
<td>ABOVE</td>
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<td>TARGET/ PROFICIENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Points</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 points</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There is appropriate amount of content to tell the story without overloading the viewer with too much or without giving enough information.</td>
<td>There is sufficient content to tell the story without overloading the viewer.</td>
<td>There is an okay amount of content to tell the story; however, there may be gaps in the story.</td>
<td>There is too much or too little content to tell the story without it interrupting the message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point of View – Purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 points</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Establishes a purpose early on and maintains a clear focus throughout.</td>
<td>Establishes a purpose early on and maintains focus for most of the presentation.</td>
<td>There are a few lapses in focus but the purpose is fairly clear.</td>
<td>It is difficult to figure out the purpose of the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Story on YouTube</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 points</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Reflections, Peers Reflections</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 points</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Digital Story Images

![Digital Story Images](image-url)
Notes

2. Ibid., 88.
3. Ibid.
4. Elizabeth Lee, Brenda Reed, and Corinne Laverty, “Preservice Teachers’ Knowledge of


8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.


11. Ibid., 212.


14. Ibid.


16. Ibid.


20. Ibid.


23. Ibid.


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.