

The University of San Francisco

USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center

Gleeson Library Faculty and Staff Research and Scholarship

Gleeson Library | Geschke Center

Spring 5-2019

Better Together: Student-Led Collaborative Media Creation

Renee Romero

University of California, Los Angeles, rromerorr@library.ucla.edu

Doug Worsham

University of California, Los Angeles, dworsham@library.ucla.edu

Annie Pho

apho2@usfca.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/librarian>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Romero, Renee; Worsham, Doug; and Pho, Annie, "Better Together: Student-Led Collaborative Media Creation" (2019). *Gleeson Library Faculty and Staff Research and Scholarship*. 23.

<https://repository.usfca.edu/librarian/23>

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the Gleeson Library | Geschke Center at USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Gleeson Library Faculty and Staff Research and Scholarship by an authorized administrator of USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. For more information, please contact repository@usfca.edu.

BETTER TOGETHER: STUDENT-LED COLLABORATIVE MEDIA CREATION

RENEE ROMERO, DOUG WORSHAM AND ANNIE PHO

INTRODUCTION

So many students to teach, so little time and staff—how can we help everyone that we want to serve and make it meaningful? Many academic libraries have been exploring creative solutions to finding sustainable ways to approach information literacy instruction that go beyond the one-shot model. One approach is to develop a decidedly learner-centered model that considers who the students are and how the library can best reach them where they are. In 2012, UCLA Library began shifting its public service model to be more student-centered through leveraging peer-to-peer learning pedagogy. This shift to peer-to-peer services has also been an important part of UCLA Library's efforts to scale up research support for a growing student population (currently 31,000 undergraduate and 15,000 graduate students). UCLA's Powell Library shifted its traditional reference desk model to become a tiered service that employed graduate students to help provide research assistance. From there, the Library explored other peer-learning models which include embedding students into interdisciplinary first-year courses and incorporating students in library instruction and outreach. This approach has been incredibly successful via its in-person incarnations, which inspired the Library to explore other ways it could leverage peer-to-peer learning in teaching and learning.

Writing Instruction + Research Education (WI+RE) at UCLA is a Creative Team of students and library staff who create dynamic, learner-centered online learning objects to help students with writing strategies, research tips, and other useful advice to support student success. Inspired by positive student and instructor feedback on UCLA Library's early efforts to scale instruction through student-centered online tutorials, WI+RE was founded in Fall 2016 as a result of pilot funding through a campus instructional improvement grant co-authored by staff from UCLA Library, the Undergraduate Research Centers, and Writing Programs. WI+RE has created a suite of online learning objects which includes videos on YouTube, workshops and tutorials that can be embedded into learning management systems, physical and digital handouts, and even a poster series as a way to help other students approach the various aspects of research. WI+RE goes beyond just focusing on creating tutorials that are traditionally seen in libraries by addressing issues that are near and dear to the student team and fellow students.

WI+RE's online workshops and tutorials have been integrated into a number of curricular contexts, including General Education and required composition courses, as well as upper division courses and undergraduate research fellowship programs. Feedback from instructors and students has been very positive, and has highlighted the simple, straightforward design of the modules, as well as their effectiveness in helping students develop research and writing skills (UCLA Center for Educational Assessment, 2017). Currently, WI+RE modules and workshops have been integrated into courses as required, extra-credit, and optional activities. As open educational materials, WI+RE's work has also been used in a variety of extra-curricular contexts, as well as by learners at other institutions.

METHODS AND TOOLS

With insight on the curriculum, established relationships with campus partners, and a well-developed infrastructure for hiring and training student employees, academic libraries are well positioned to launch student-led media teams. The following tools and resources are intended to help identify key steps and considerations when designing and launching programs.

The job ad emphasized passion for learning instead of hard skills. I was excited by the prospect of being in a workplace where learning is an ongoing process rather than a prerequisite. – Kian, WI+RE Creative Team Member.

Even though working for WI+RE involves developing technical skills, the recruitment process makes it clear that no previous technical experience is required. Instead, the focus is on recruiting students that are passionate about learning, making a difference, and helping others (Worsham, 2018). De-emphasizing previous experience with technical tools helps create a more inclusive, welcoming, and conversational introduction to the job, and is intended to foster a more diverse applicant pool.

Making *Learning* the Focus of *Training*

Once student employees are hired, the focus becomes on the job learning. It is important to note that WI+RE doesn't frame "training" as a distinct, short-term period of time. Instead, self-directed, on the job learning happens every shift.

I learned a great set of skills and tools in a relatively short amount of time... making WI+RE one of the most memorable and meaningful working/learning experiences I have had during my two-year Masters program at UCLA. – Jeannie, former WI+RE Creative Team Member.

On the job learning begins with a collaborative mini-course called "Foundations in Pedagogy and Design" (Worsham & Roux, 2019). The course is organized as a series of opportunities to reflect on, write about, and share personal learning experiences. These personal reflections and cohort-based discussions provide the foundation for several key learning theories (e.g., active learning, social-constructivism, and critical pedagogy), which we call "key ideas" in the mini-course. In each case, rather than taking a theory-heavy approach, the focus is on helping new members of the WI+RE team ground the key ideas in their own previous experiences while also sharing and discussing learning experiences with other members of the team.

Next, new hires dive into a collaborative and creative exploration of learner-centered design through two cohort-based projects: a personal learning narrative (UCLA WI+RE, 2018b) and a learning strategy video (UCLA WI+RE, 2018a). Together, these projects provide direct experience with the stages of the design process and are the primary way students learn animation software, audio recording and editing tools, web publishing, and other technical skills. This process of learning technical skills *while* creating (rather than *before* creating) sets the standard for future WI+RE projects.

Co-Creating a Manifesto with your Team

The WI+RE Way (UCLA WI+RE, 2019) is a collaboratively authored and evolving document that describes the values that drive WI+RE's work. Articulating shared values is an essential, but often neglected aspect of creative work. The WI+RE Way provides insight into WI+RE's approach and often helps the team address design challenges. For example, the shared value to "build imperfect solutions quickly and on purpose" helps the team overcome common challenges with perfectionism. The shared value to "celebrate our diverse communities" informs much of our work, including how we recognize community contributors and how we choose examples and content for our tutorials.

Turning your Design Process into a Toolbox

In addition to creating a team manifesto, it is important to have well-defined tools and techniques for each stage of the design process. WI+RE's design toolkit (Brecher Cook & Worsham, 2018) includes tools for empathy mapping, learning outcome development, rapid prototyping, and giving helpful feedback.

Developing a common design toolkit has a number of advantages, from helping team members identify next steps to fostering breakthroughs when projects get stuck. WI+RE also recommends taking a flexible approach with these tools. For example, if entering into a project with broad and not fully defined challenges, WI+RE is likely to work through the full process with an extensive focus on learning outcomes development. Other projects might start with the learning outcomes already specifically defined, allowing WI+RE to move directly from empathy mapping to rapid prototyping.

Fostering a Collaborative Learning Community

WI+RE thrives on a collaborative learning community consisting of a Creative Team and community members that partner throughout the design process. WI+RE's Creative team consists of undergraduate and graduate student designers who lead meetings, conduct design jams, and create learning materials. WI+RE's community represents various fields and perspectives, including librarians from multiple campus library locations and staff from UCLA's Undergraduate Research Centers, Writing Programs, and the Center for Digital Humanities. Together, the WI+RE Creative Team and WI+RE community partner discuss, create and assess various strategies to help the student population succeed in their research and writing goals. A learning community with

interdisciplinary and varied perspectives strengthens WI+RE's ability to meet the shared values outlined in The WI+RE Way, by allowing us to expand our perspectives and learn from each other on how to meet student needs.

While each voice and perspective in the community makes important contributions, the WI+RE Creative Team members are the primary leaders of the design and process. Empowering students to lead, design, and co-create their learning experiences results in materials that are more meaningful and relevant to the student population. Students experience the challenges of succeeding in academic institutions first-hand, and design materials that directly address these challenges, such as WI+RE's handout on the etiquette of contacting instructors. Student-led design makes such materials more relatable, with little jargon and a perspective focused on helping students through the process from the positionality of a peer.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning

WI+RE embraces a culture of diversity and representation and works to create culturally responsive materials that reflect all learners at UCLA. WI+RE's diverse student-led Creative Team intentionally chooses and features "positive, inclusive, and relevant" voices, perspectives, and narratives in its materials, which may traditionally be underrepresented at academic institutions (UCLA WI+RE, 2019). We believe diverse communities should be celebrated and that all learners should see themselves reflected in materials and services that support academic success (Bonnet & McAlexander, 2012). WI+RE's video, *Getting Started With Research at UCLA* (Harper & Roux, 2017), reflects this value, featuring the narratives of students from various backgrounds talking about their research journeys and empowering other students to succeed at UCLA. For this video, WI+RE won the 2018 Association of Research Libraries film festival award, "the ARLies," for the Best Reflection of Diversity.

WI+RE's dedication to supporting and reflecting diverse communities extends to the design process, with a shared value to "pursue universal design at every stage of the process" (UCLA WI+RE, 2019).

Thinking so actively and consciously about different learners, instructors, and goals as part of our instructional design process really leads me to think about accessibility on multiple levels: physically, psychologically, culturally, and more. – Jen, former WI+RE Creative Team Member.

In addition to learning why and how to meet accessibility guidelines for web and media publishing, WI+RE Creative Team members also learn to intentionally recognize and address learner's different needs throughout the design process. This involves exploring the diversity of learners and learning contexts when empathy mapping, recognizing hidden challenges for various learning journeys, and designing multiple pathways for learning, another of WI+RE's shared values. This value affects not only the materials WI+RE creates but the platforms by which we offer our materials. WI+RE's student-led community extends across a website, YouTube channel, learning management system, and social media, creating various modes of interaction for learners that meet different learning needs or preferences. On these platforms, learners can find videos, online tutorials, handouts, and posters, as well as learn about WI+RE's design process and even provide feedback on prototypes currently in development.

CONCLUSION

Planning, creating, and supporting a program like WI+RE relies on a commitment to student-centered service design, and may require shifts in workplace culture and traditional approaches. The primary challenge in this area is the need to let go of library-centered perspectives on research and information in order to truly allow students to reframe projects from their own perspectives and based on their own understandings of learner needs and challenges. Funding providers and stakeholders may also be used to determining priorities and outcomes and as such may be less familiar with a student-led model in which learners themselves are taking the lead, framing the challenges, and setting the direction.

Articulating the values and philosophy of your student-led program is essential for addressing these challenges, and also for effectively communicating the purpose and goals of your program to stakeholders and funders. Connecting with campus partners and other institutions that are already incorporating student leadership into their service models can be very beneficial in the development of your approach. Most importantly, partnering directly with the learners at your institution is the best way to get started: How do they describe their challenges? What are they looking for but not getting at your institution? What are their ideas for creative solutions to learning challenges? What do they want to learn and make together?

What's next for WI+RE?

WI+RE is currently working on three large projects: an avoiding plagiarism online workshop, a hands-on, guided introduction to writing literature reviews, and a website designed to help students read scientific literature. In each case, WI+RE is continuing to partner across library units and across the campus, and we are very excited about the many areas this work may be integrated in both courses and community learning experiences. At the same time, we are launching an open online mini-course based on the WI+RE training program that we hope will grow and develop through community input and feedback.

REFERENCES

- Bonnet, J. L., & McAlexander, B. (2012). Structural diversity in academic libraries: A study of librarian approachability. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 38(5), 277–286. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2012.06.002>
- Brecher Cook, D., & Worsham, D. (2018, April). *Let's build something (The Toolkit)*. Retrieved from <https://ucla.app.box.com/v/build-something-toolkit>
- Harper, T., & Roux, S. (2017, July 7). Getting started with research at UCLA - WI+RE. Retrieved from <https://uclalibrary.github.io/research-tips/getting-started/>
- UCLA Center for Educational Assessment. (2017, June). *WI+RE's Center for Educational Assessment Report - WI+RE*. Retrieved from <https://uclalibrary.github.io/research-tips/sandbox/cea-report/>
- UCLA WI+RE. (2018a). *Reading strategies with WI+RE* [YouTube video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRPedAkoIOOC6z-iP2S-clQ>
- UCLA WI+RE. (2018b). *WI+RE learning narratives playlist*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLV8eqWoGXke7bbWJpk3LBlvTmQuuWqt3J>
- UCLA WI+RE. (2019, March 11). WI+RE's Manifesto - The WI+RE Way. Retrieved from <https://uclalibrary.github.io/research-tips/wire-way/>
- Worsham, D. (2018, February 22). Like learning and design? Join the WI+RE team! Retrieved from <https://uclalibrary.github.io/mail/wire-job-opportunity.html>
- Worsham, D., & Roux, S. (2019). Foundations in learner-centered design. Retrieved from <https://uclalibrary.github.io/foundations>