Presentation Talking Points

Slide 1
At the University of Northern Colorado, we have three librarians dedicated full time to delivering library instruction to approximately 10,000 students. In terms of delivering instruction, our students have requested that there be more digital learning objects available. This information was discovered through responses from LibQUAL collected in 2010. Meeting the needs and wants of our students by offering more instructional videos seems feasible at first blush; however, it is difficult to justify the impact of such time-consuming projects. We asked students to create videos that appeal to their peers. The following research questions were posed:

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- Will the creation of media projects enable students to learn core research concepts and skills?
- Will a series of peer-created media engage students and help them acclimate to researching in an academic library?

By asking students to create videos, we were able to observe how users interact with and perceive library resources, such as next-generation discovery tools and information literacy concepts (e.g., differentiating primary from secondary sources). The videos will be used in a workshop setting as teaching tools so we can observe if students are engaged by peer-created videos and learn necessary skills. We hope the implications of this research will guide future decisions regarding the creation of instruction-related media and the understanding of user behavior.

Through a new initiative, the Collection of Online Learning Objects for Research Success (the COLORS project), all students will have access to peer-created library educational media that is available online for point-of-need use. Nonetheless, it is important to assess students’ reaction to
peer-created media and determine whether the COLORS Project addresses the instructional needs of students unfamiliar with navigating library research.

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Over the span of two semesters, there was a total of 77 undergraduate students from the University of Northern Colorado. In fall 2011, 40 students in two online sections of Introduction to Undergraduate Research (LIB 150) – a one-credit course – participated. A little bit about the students: one course was designated for health science majors and the other was open enrollment meaning that students from any major could enroll. Students could be at any point in their academic careers (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, or seniors). One more note about the online courses: many of our distance students live in close proximity to campus.

In Spring 2012, 37 students in three sections of Introduction to Undergraduate Research participated. A little bit about the students: they are all enrolled in the Center for Human Enrichment, which is a program designed for first-generation college students. Students were divided into groups. After creating a storyboard approved by the instructor, each group created a 3-5 minute video to educate peers about either using a specific library tool or explaining a research concept.

Sample Assignment Topics:
- How do you evaluate resources? Why is it important?
- How do you find books and articles through Summon?
- What are the differences between popular and scholarly resources?

Completed video projects were selected for inclusion on a LibGuide. The page is available for anyone to view and will be used during orientation workshops designed for new students. We used a web-based survey tool called ZoHo Creator. The survey included five structured questions about attitudes with the possible responses of “yes, no, or I’m not sure.” In addition, there were five open-ended questions to gather more information.

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So, now for the results… Open-ended questions always provide information the researcher wasn’t necessarily looking for, but can be useful all the same. Knowing that a group project compelled local online students to actually enter the physical domain of the library when they otherwise would not have is useful, even if it is anecdotal, information. This type of feedback from students will aid in designing future projects.

We measured our first research question, “Will the creation of media projects enable students to learn core research concepts and skills?” with two separate questions. The first question was in two parts: before the project, were students confident teaching someone else the assigned topic; and querying students concerning their level of confidence of teaching the library research skill or concept after completing the media project.

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This chart shows that even before completing the project the majority of students believed they could teach others the assigned topic, while 36% of students were either not confident or unsure
of their abilities. We may be seeing a little bit of student overconfidence in the before responses, but we cannot be certain as we did not test their actual knowledge of the library research skill or concept prior to completing the media project.

After completing the project, zero percent of students reported having no confidence in their abilities, the percentage of students who were uncertain shrank from 18% to 6%, and an overwhelming 94% of students believed they could teach the assigned topic to others. The number of students confident in their ability to teach a core library research skill or concept to others increased dramatically after completion of the media project.

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Also geared towards answering our first research question, we asked students to determine whether this project would be valuable to future students for learning skills and concepts. A majority answered that the project was valuable enough to the learning process to be taught to future students, but about one-third of students remained unsure as to the value of the project for future students.

**Slide 7**
On the screen is more student feedback… The open-ended feedback questions yielded some of the most telling results.

Our second research question was “Will a series of peer-created media engage students and help them acclimate to researching in an academic library?” We measured the second part of this question concerning acclimation to library research with the data on students learning the core library research concepts and skills well enough to teach others.

**Slide 8**
To measure the student engagement portion of the question, we asked students to self-report on their engagement. This graph shows three groups of results: the overall percentage of all students, just online students, and just face-to-face students. The darker green on the left represents combined results for all students, the white represents students in online sections, and the lighter green represents students in face-to-face sections. Overall, a majority of students reported being engaged by the media project.

However, prominent differences can be seen between the online and face-to-face students. As you can see in the middle comparison group, far fewer (8%) of students in face-to-face sections were definite in their answer of not being engaged by the project, than students in the online sections where 30% of students were definite about not being engaged by the project. In the comparison group on the right, we can see that a greater percentage of students in the face-to-face sections were definite in their abilities to teach others. Yet, in the left comparison group on the chart, we can see a larger number of students in the face-to-face sections were uncertain of their engagement in the project. Students in the face-to-face sections reported two reasons for remaining uncertain about their engagement:

1. multiple students said the project was not challenging, and
2. students did not like group work.

This is perhaps an indication that we to design the project to a greater degree of difficulty.
We also asked students to report back on how long it took their groups to complete the project from beginning to end. The majority of face-to-face students indicated that their groups spent 3-4 hours on the assignment; the majority of online students indicated that their groups spent 5-6 hours on the assignment. Increased time required to complete the project may reflect in students’ lack of engagement. Anecdotally, many students in the online sections of the course commented on the difficulty of setting up meeting times with all group members; logistics of this type may also have led to some amount of disenchantment with the project.

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Five other themes appeared in the responses to an open-ended question concerning student reaction to the project. These themes appeared strongly in both online and face-to-face student responses. First, the students commented that they learned. The research concepts and skills assigned to students meet two standards of ACRL’s Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education:

- Standard Two: the information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently; and
- Standard Three: The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

The assignment addresses these two competency standards and therefore has additional significance to students.

While many students indicated they learned from this project, other students commented that the project provided a good review of library research concepts and skills. Further, students reported that they really enjoyed the group aspect of the assignment. Many students commented on how fun it was to spend time with their classmates and get to know each other. Another theme seen throughout student responses was their engagement and excitement with learning and using technologies – from Flipcams to editing software. Students also responded that they enjoyed the interactivity of the assignment – students becoming the teachers and working with each other to build their videos were both mentioned. Moreover, students expressed delight with the ability to be creative; especially in a class they imagined to be all reading and lecture.

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And while our research is not concluded, at this point we have reached a few tentative conclusions:

- The creation of videos enabled students to learn core research concepts and skills.
- Group created videos engaged students in the learning process.
- Group videos may be more suited to face-to-face courses than for online courses.
- Students are able to create quality digital teaching objects that can be used by librarians and instructors to teach others.

A note on this last conclusion: Not all projects are quality projects. Students can and do create projects that teach the skill or concept, but include some small piece of misinformation; there are also technical issues, such as poor sound quality, that can prove insurmountable to sharing the
videos further. Instructors must be selective in their choice of videos that go forward as teaching tools. However, librarians and instructors need to find a method of producing quality digital teaching objects for use in the classroom, at the reference desk, or by students wherever they are. We all know that the creation of a professional media may take hours and hours of work time, only to find that the web interface of the library or a vendor changes significantly enough for the media to be rendered obsolete. This project has the potential of being as beneficial for instructors and librarians as it is for students.

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Our tentative conclusions are as follows:

- The creation of media projects enabled students to learn core research concepts and skills.
- Group created videos engaged students in the learning process.
- Group video projects may be more suited to face-to-face courses.
- Students create quality digital teaching objects to be used by librarians and instructors.

**Slide 11**

This was a pilot project, and we discovered a few limitations:

- When we asked students the before and after question: Did you feel confident in your ability to teach someone about your assigned topic? We should have tested their knowledge about the particular issue/concept rather than relying on their perception.
- Do you think future students would find this project “valuable?” -- We should have provided some additional context or used a word other than “valuable” as it was too open-ended.
- Students viewed all the final projects before taking the survey, which may have skewed the results as they would be comparing the success of their projects to those of their classmates. Having students complete the survey before viewing other projects would have been ideal.

**Slide 12**

This quotation nicely summarizes what we hoped to find with this initial research—that student-created videos both increased student confidence in their learning and engaged them in the learning process. We will continue to gather data from future courses. We will also use the videos created by students to determine if peer-created videos are just as or more effective than instructor-created videos.