Strategies for Developing a Community Focused Blended Learning Project

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Today

- Discuss the project
- Cultural Geography Honors course (Prof. Jen Klton):
  - Collaboration and objectives
  - Course Assignments and Blended Learning
  - Discuss partnering with the community
- The Glassboro Memory Mapping Project (GMM)
- Technologies
- Recommended Strategies
About the GMM project

Collaborative community partnership

- Rowan University Digital Scholarship Center
- Rowan University’s Cultural Geography Honors Course
- The Glassboro Historical Society
- The Heritage Glass Museum

Developing a collaboration

- G. Historical Society provided material; identify
- Access to local experts for photo elicitation
- Writing descriptions; documenting
About the Cultural Geography Honors Course

- Provide relevant, real world experiences in cultural geography
  - Experiential learning
  - Fieldwork, research methods and writing, interview skills (oral history)
  - Critical and spatial thinking, creative and design thinking, GIS
  - Metadata, handling archival material, and digital media development

- Explore how digital archives could be used in the classroom
- As a micro-community; model ideas shared in course material
GMM Project Brief and Objectives

- **Project brief**
  - Purpose, opportunities, research questions
  - Target audience, technology and design

- **Project Objectives (Main objectives)**
  - Relevant, real-world experiences
  - Appreciation for a local community's heritage
  - Digital archive collections enhance place-based experience and engagement in the present
  - Digitize, curate, and unify endangered historical material
Course projects and Blended Learning

First semester Blended Learning and Outcomes:

- In class demos and discussions
- Walking tour and Glass Museum
- Google drive: Various resources
- Digitization of material
  - Handling historical material
  - Scanning
  - File naming and backup
- Uploading digitized files to the archive system
- Photo elicitation with local experts
- Researched and wrote item records
- Add metadata
First Semester Missteps

- Time consuming
- Difficult to keep students organized
- Clear directions; Misnaming files, missing files
- Lacked technology skills; file management
- Students were not motivated and engaged; viewed tasks as labor
- Low and inconsistent quality
Course projects and Blended Learning

Rework student assignments

● Autonomy; finding problem to solve; creative experiences
● More active research
● Experiential learning; Generational learning

Redeveloped course assignments:

● Research and write one item record; including photo elicitation
● Create an online interactive, essay using a geographical approach
Photo elicitations with Glassboro residents

Explore Library resources - newspapers, books, librarians

Public Library

Gloucester County Historical archive

Rowan University Archive

Tour of Glassboro historical sites

Guided tour of Glass Museum

George Armstrong and Robert Tucker

Gloucester County Historical Society
Class discussions

Tour of Glassboro sites

Photo elicitation with Maureen St. John

Outside Heritage Glass Museum
The Glassboro Memory Mapping Project

Current Glassboro Memory Mapping Project

- Approximately 500 item records;
- Researched; written descriptions & metadata
- Approx. 900 images/documents; including rephotography
- Oral histories and short audio clips
- Timeline (in development)
- Maps
- Digitization of related books (copyright approved)
- Student interactive essays (Currently 32)

https://glassborohistory.org/digitalarchive
Historical Record

- Research and write
- Additional photos
- Links to additional material
- Map
- Metadata and Tags
- Citation
Interactive, reflective essays

Created using Scalar

- Open-source; hosted web platform
- Media-rich, interactive scholarly web-publishing
- Will be integrated into archive

https://www.rowandsc.org/student-projects/
For Credit Internship

- Digitized photos, images, and documents
- Photographed objects
- Audio and transcription
- Uploaded material; Metadata
- Researched and wrote item records
- Visiting public library and county archive to research buildings and people
Technologies

Commercial Web Hosting $100 per year
Omeka (Curatescape theme) Open-source
Scalar Open-source
Google Drive University storage
5 - Zoom Audio recorder Previously purchased
Student iPhone NA
Design software University provide
Experiences and Reflection

- Missteps
  - Group digitization project

- Successes
  - Giving students autonomy to find their problem to solve
  - Experiential Student learning; generational learning
  - Community collaboration & engagement
  - Technology and budget
  - Future collaborations

- Student experiences
“I really enjoyed doing the project because I feel that I have contributed important information to the Glassboro community.”

“The project gave me a greater appreciation for how place, whether it is a specific building, or a town in general, can have different meanings throughout its history.”

“I absolutely loved this project honestly. I thought it was so different than any project I had previously done.”

“This project was really impactful and made me appreciate this state from a geographical point of view, a view I never would’ve thought about if I hadn’t taken this class.”
Recommended Strategies

- Have courage! Learn as you go
- Project brief (plan)
- Getting involved with the community; give back
- Be an experimenter of technology
- Design relevant, real-world projects
  - Focus on the benefits of students and the wider community
- Give students autonomy to find problem to solve
- Build team of sincere collaborators
Questions