WHAT WE STAND TO GAIN:
LIBRARIANS LEADING COLLABORATIVE
ASSIGNMENT DESIGN

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European Conference on Information Literacy
September 2017
THE WORKSHOP
COLLABORATING ON ASSIGNMENT DESIGN

“What is the value of collaborating with librarians and other faculty on assignment design?”
VALUE OF PEER FEEDBACK

Solving problems through dialogue
Finding value in vulnerability
Realizing no “perfect assignment”

It’s really important to share your work with others. Historians, we’re very individualistic…Getting all of those perspectives was really essential for me. It not only built my confidence as an instructor, I think it really helped break down this assignment for students in a way they could better understand.
Gaining fresh perspective
Remembering novices
Surfacing common challenges

We were put up in those groups with so many different perspectives... Because I'm teaching a large survey class, that was really helpful because it sort of represented the types of students I have.
The thing that unites everybody at that table is the fact that they all have an interest in education, and furthering ideas, and teaching people. But we don't often get together and collaborate on that stuff… Not everybody is invested in you being a good teacher for teaching’s sake.
“How could the final research product reflect authentic research practices in the discipline or engage a wider public? For example, could the end product be another media or genre than a traditional research paper?”

AUTHENTICITY
I gave up that busywork. This garbage to do at the end of the semester to prove they learned something, but it’s not guaranteed they’re going to take anything away from this class as a result of it.
I think it reinforces my sense, that if the bar is here, they’ll meet it. Especially when they’re responsible to their peers.
I think handing in a research paper that’s only going to be read by a professor is a really different experience than being accountable to your peers, creating a high stakes project that’s going to be publicly available.
NEED FOR BREAKING IT DOWN

Assigning roles
Higher quality end products
Reflecting on conflict

I did not realize how hard it is for students to do group projects. I mean, every single group had a conflict.
“Did you learn anything new about your students or yourselves this semester as a result of this project?”
LEARNERS NEED SCAFFOLDS

Levels of scaffolds
Scaffolds for research skills
Scaffolds for soft skills

The main lesson I think being the more you can give them in terms of support the better thing they'll produce…
ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT LEARNERS’ PROFICIENCY

Surprise at skill level
Frustrations as instructors
Re-thinking expectations
Positive assumptions

Maybe my expectations were a little bit too high of what students can do. I figured people knew how to find a journal article. I realized that it wasn’t just my students that were struggling with this, but students in general do.
We were about five or six weeks in and she suggested, “I’m thinking that I’d like to organize my essay [this way]. It would still meet the criteria required for the assignment if I were to do it this way.” I said, “Well, let’s experiment with that and see what you think.”
SHIFTS IN TEACHING

- Spending class-time differently
- Motivation to do more
- Placing students at the center
- Making time for assignment design

It was pretty eye opening when I did a reflection on what the process was like. I’m a very boring instructor when it comes to assignment creation.
WHY THE LIBRARY?
WHY LIBRARIANS?

Iterative nature of assignment design

Disciplinary definitions of “research”

Value of relationships
QUESTIONS?

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