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OPEN TEXTBOOK PRODUCTION AS PARTICIPATORY EDUCATION



DALY, DIANA
SCHOOL OF INFORMATION
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
TUCSON, ARIZONA

Dr. Diana Daly
School of Information
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona

Open Textbook Production as Participatory Education

Synopsis:

In the 2020-22 academic year, a student media lab was launched at a large southwestern university, with the purpose of integrating student stories into curricula and scholarship around technologies. In this article, this project is presented as a case and model of participatory education, with examples and links, description of steps taken to implement the project, discussion of resources that contributed to the project's intended and beneficial outcomes, and best practices for implementation.

Open Textbook Production as Participatory Education: Student Stories in *Humans R Social Media*

Extended Abstract

In the 2020-22 academic year, iVoices student media lab was launched at a large southwestern university, with the purpose of integrating student stories into curricula and scholarship around technologies. The lead of the project is the instructor of a large (150 cap) General Education course on social media, which became the center of the project. The instructor first created *Humans R Social Media*, a basic textbook for the course in Pressbooks, an open source content management system designed for creating books. Then, with training by a team of student media lab workers ranging from two to six undergraduates, the students of the course composed text, audio stories, videos, and graphics in response to Media Lab Project prompts. In these stories, students applied core concepts from the course to their experiences with social media in their lives. At the end of the semester, just over half of the students in each of the two classes (Fall 2020 and Spring 2021) elected to openly license their stories for integration in the textbook and general reuse. In this article, this project is presented as a case and potential model of participatory education, including examples and links, description of steps taken to implement the project, and discussion of key resources that contributed to the project's intended and beneficial outcomes. The article will also recommend best practices for integrating student knowledge around technologies into new media curricula, and for creating a media lab around student perspectives on social and educational technologies.

The concept of participatory education motivating this project is grounded in tenets of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006), as applied to an educational context in which students are immersed in the domain under study. Participation is the key tenet in the popular pedagogies of both active learning and student-centered learning (Motschnig-Pitrik & Holzinger 2002). Technologies affect users differently across even similar populations because users make sense of them through personal, ideological, and cultural lenses (Gershon 2010; boyd 2014). Ideally emerging from this sensemaking are individualized new media knowledge and literacy, which in tech-rich environments can be foundations for students' senses of self-efficacy and resulting persistence as learners (Bandura et al., 1999).

This project is designed to activate critical “funds of knowledge” (González et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992) students have around personal and group uses of technologies at home and among peers, knowledge they can share through stories they tell and creative work they produce around new technologies in their lives.

There is a need for concrete examples of *how* to invite student perspectives on the technologies in which they are immersed into class texts and curricula. This paper will present a roadmap on how the student media lab project invited and integrated student perspectives including steps followed, and explain the key resources the project relied upon divided into three categories. The first category of resources [project] relied on is *Open Culture Innovations*, including resources and practices in open pedagogy, the open source book platform, and Creative Commons licensing. The second category of key resources is *Institutional Support*, including funding by the institution, collaboration with librarians in creating licensing agreements, and the institution library's adoption and premium support of the open source platform [redacted] where the book and student work is hosted. The third and final category of key resources is *Knowledgeable Creative Labor*, including that of this author and instructor, the paid team of student workers, the unpaid team of graduate student interns, and credited students whose work was integrated into the textbook.

The article will include excerpts and statistics relating to student contributions, presentation of program evaluation data, and preliminary research findings. Broader impacts of the project will be discussed, including the value of the collected stories as archive and data set. The article will conclude with broader impacts of the project in higher education institutions, student experience expectations, and scholarship on media and technologies.

References

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