

Student Name

Ellen Cecil-Lemkin

ENG 3493

30 March 2018

Project 2 Reflection

When approaching this project, I knew I had to choose a digital medium. There was no way I could research Digital Studios and NOT present my findings in a digital format, made using a program they would instruct on within one of these multiliteracy centers. It was just too perfect of an opportunity, and a great way to showcase the power of being well versed in many different digital contexts. In my project, I talk to some length about multimodal projects and how Digital Studios can help students approach these projects and gain the skills they need to be digitally literate and unlock the full potential of their creativity, and I hoped to demonstrate that through my project itself. It's all quite meta.

The only question was which medium to choose. I originally planned on creating a video – that would be the comfortable option, as I've done videos for several different multimodal projects in the past. However, a finding in one of the research papers showed that students are often pigeon-holed into one type of media they know well, and struggle to branch out. Eager to not fall into this trap (imagine the irony) I decided to pivot my assignment to a podcast, an area I had far less experience in creating. I also determined a podcast would be more suitable for my target audience.

I came to this conclusion based on a few criteria. First, a podcast is a very digestible way of delivering content. While often lengthy, their audio format allows the listener to absorb the media on the go. You can listen to a podcast literally anywhere, and it doesn't require your full

attention like a video would. Writing center tutors are busy people, and don't necessarily have the time to sit down and watch a video or read through a research paper, so a podcast serves as one of the best ways to deliver content to an individual with a busy schedule. Podcasts are also pretty popular right now, probably because of their accessible nature for those on-the-go, so it seemed to be a time-appropriate choice as well. My last consideration was related to audience interest. With videos now-a-days, people expect them to be short and sweet. It was inconceivable for me to put as much information into a video as I wanted to, keep it fun/interesting, AND keep it short and to the point. There just wasn't enough room for what I wanted to accomplish. With a podcast, I could hold listener's interest while simultaneously unpacking all of my research. The two could weave into each other, as it would be a combination of my personality and humor that would entertain the listener while still communicating the facts of my topic. People want to be entertained, and a podcast seemed to be the most effective way of doing so without comprising the informative nature of my project.

Once I decided on the medium, there were several rhetorical choices I had to make. I wanted to stay as true to the conventions of the podcast form as I could, but in the end unfortunately had to cut a few. For example, podcasts often have music play before and after the show begins, as a way of fading in and out the speakers without it sounding too jarring. However, as I reached the end of the editing process I decided to leave this out in the interest of time, as my finished product was becoming quite lengthy (justification on that later). Podcasts also typically consist of a guest or co-host throughout the piece (though not all) but I had to revise this formula to meet my project goals.

Whereas a typical podcast would have the host interviewing or talking through a topic with a guest for the majority of the show, I decided to do the opposite. Instead, I talked through

the topic of digital studios on my own for the majority of the podcast and brought the guest on at the end to dial in on student expectations of digital studios. This decision was mainly informed by the project requirements. Since I had to engage with at least seven sources in my piece, I felt it would be wholly inorganic and awkward to do so during a conversation with a guest. Trying to bring up different research papers and tutoring methods would have been the verbal equivalent of jumping through rings of fire (maybe a little extreme of an example, but still accurate), especially since my guest was a student and not a tutor. To avoid this, I decided to bring up the research and provide an overview of the topic on my own. This way, I could engage with the researched materials and synthesize their points, without having to worry about steering a conversation towards said points. I also justified this decision by using the guest as a kind of “specialist” to talk about one specific part of the topic, as a way to zoom in on the subject and get a different perspective.

The entertainment factor played an important role in the way I approached this project. I made it a point in my performance to remain casual and try to bring out my personality in the piece. Podcasts are by nature easy to listen to and the hosts try to be relatable and down-to-earth with their audience, to create a closer connection and an intimate atmosphere. This is why I chose to use informal language and crack jokes, to relax the whole vibe of the podcast and hopefully make the information more palatable. I also made it a priority to give the illusion that this was a real podcast that had episodes before it, and a real audience. I wanted to make this podcast feel authentic, and to accomplish this I sort of created a character for myself. I referenced an imaginary producer, made jokes about future segments, and at one point when bringing up Universal Design I said, “We had an episode about this already”. Hopefully these quips made the podcast feel more true and enhanced the ethos of the piece.

Another main rhetorical choice I made was the length of the podcast. While I intended to keep the podcast to a manageable 10 minutes, I realized while recording that this wasn't feasible, for several reasons. For one, I just had too much ground to cover. My topic extends from the needs of a digital studio, all the way to techniques used in digital tutoring sessions and the expectations students have from these sessions. Accomplishing that in 10 minutes would be difficult, but overall still possible if not for my other project goals. As stated earlier, I tried to maintain a casual approach to the podcast and speak in plain terms in a very conversational manner. This was an intentional effect I felt aided the podcast and made it more approachable and fun to listen to. It would not be possible to maintain a fun and intimate tone if I was trying to cram seven sources worth of information into ten minutes. At that point, the podcast would sound more like a recorded lecture, which I wanted to avoid. In the end, I decide it was worth the extra time to make the podcast interesting and conversational, rather than sacrifice my unique voice for compression of ideas and language.

As for the organization of the podcast, I wanted to make the whole project flow logically and make sense for the listener as I progressed through my points. I started with an intro where I laid out how the episode would go, so the audience had a clear idea of what was going to be addressed. I then broke my discussion into three points: the need for digital studios, digital studio practices, and student experiences in the digital studio. I decided to put the student experience last, so it would smoothly transition into the interview with the FSU student. Looking back, I could have probably kept my discussion neater, as I sometimes jumped ahead to some topics which could cause some confusion. I also had a lack of any real solid conclusion in the piece, other than a short blurb where I define digital studios as the future of writing center work. I could have probably done a better job summing up my points and presenting them at the end of the

piece.

Overall, I am happy with the final product and would make small changes a second time around. I would provide myself with more direction with some of my talking points, as even though the improvisational nature of the podcast was intentional, I found myself occasionally getting lost and tripped up over some thoughts. I would also save some more time for the interview, as it is quite quick and didn't reach the depth I had hoped on the topic. Other than these, I feel as if I made the appropriate rhetorical choices to adequately inform my audience in an entertaining and digestible fashion.