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Facilitating Student-Authored Papers in LIS Education Research: A Case Study from the LIS Classroom

Abstract

This paper describes the process and tools used to facilitate a collaborative student-authored paper that was recently published as a short communication in the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* (*JELIS*). This paper is written by the instructor of the course and provides direction to other LIS instructors on how to successfully facilitate publishable quality student-authored papers as an in-class activity using online collaborative teaching tools.

1. Introduction

This paper describes the process and tools used to facilitate a collaborative student-authored paper that was recently published as a short communication in the *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* (*JELIS*). "Title of Article [removed for review]" was written by a group of Master's of Library and Information Science (LIS) students as part of an in-class activity that was designed to give students the opportunity to contribute to LIS scholarship on teaching and learning (SoTL). This paper is written by the instructor of the course and provides direction to other LIS instructors on how to successfully facilitate publishable quality student-authored papers as an in-class activity using online collaborative teaching tools.

2. Literature Review

Student-authored papers as in-class activities are a form of *authentic learning*, a pedagogy that encourages students to engage with real-world problems and projects and to create tangible, polished products that are immediately useful within the contexts relevant to their education (Hung, 2014). Student-authored papers can help prepare future LIS professionals for their careers by contributing to professional development, building their role as community change-agents, and exposing them to the publishing process.

The use of Google Drive and Survey Monkey were critical to both the timeline of the paper project and ensuring that all students had an opportunity to contribute equally to the paper. Research into the use of Google Drive shows that having students work collaboratively in an online environment to create their own content can enhance communication, alter the power dynamics found in a traditional classroom setting, and also promote more critical perspectives on knowledge and authority (Cotugno, 2014; George, Dreibelbis & Aumiller, 2013; Rowe, Bozalek, & Frantz, 2013).

Student-authored papers are also important for advancements and research in LIS education, as best-practices for SoTL projects already include student participation as a major principle (Felten, 2013). Student participation in SoTL, and therefore future curriculum design, can lead to diverse perspectives on learning that can improve both teaching and student learning (Brooman, Darwent, & Pimor, 2015; Cook-Sather, 2014).

3. Process and Tools for the Student-Authored Paper Project

Motivation for Student-Authored Paper

This project was created to provide students enrolled in a Social Justice in LIS course the opportunity to apply classroom-based knowledge to real-world social change efforts. Based on feedback from a mid-term evaluation, my observation was that the students in the class wanted to extend their knowledge and practice beyond the classroom to gain practical change-making skills that they could use later in their careers. With the remaining time that we had in the course, I pitched to the class that we do a communications project: publishing a scholarly paper in LIS to motivate change in the LIS community.

Student-Authored Paper Project Design

There were three stages of this project that were run as in-class activities ranging from 30-90 minutes each. The fourth stage was volunteer editing and the fifth stage was done by the instructor after the class had finished.

Stage 1: Choosing a Topic and Scope

An initial brainstorm was conducted with the class to select a topic for the paper. For this class, the topic of addressing social justice in all LIS courses was an issue that we often discussed and many students felt passionate about.

At this stage, we also looked at journals that would be appropriate for this topic and what their length requirements would be. *JELIS* was chosen because of its scope, credibility, and Short Communication option for publication.

Stage 2: Content Creation with Survey Monkey

After the topic was decided, I created a set of guiding questions based on our class discussions that would facilitate content creation for different sections of the paper (Introduction, Literature Review, Body Paragraphs, Conclusion). The questions were then reviewed, changed, and added to by the students. I added the questions to a Survey Monkey framework with text boxes and students filled out the survey anonymously with their responses to the questions.

Stage 3: Real-Time Collaboration with Google Drive

When the surveys were completed, the class was divided into groups and each group was assigned a Google Drive documents file that contained the responses to one of the survey questions. In real-time together, they analyzed the responses for themes and then summarized their findings, similar to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This ensured that each student's responses were considered and included. Each group then wrote their findings into paragraphs that now correspond to each section in the published paper.

Stage 4: Editing (up to 4 weeks outside of class)

In this class, editing was done by a smaller group of students and the instructor after the course was finished. If possible, this should be done by volunteers outside of class time before the course ends. Students were assigned to finish writing, proofreading, and editing where necessary. The instructor edited for consistency and quality across the overall paper to ensure adequate flow and that it was well-written enough to be accepted for publication.

Stage 5: Publishing (6+ months after course)

Since publication can take a considerable amount of time, the instructor was responsible for submitting the paper for publication, communicating with publisher, making revisions/organizing student revisers, and contacting students for publisher requested tasks. Students were updated at each step via email.

Ethical Considerations

Since all students were co-inquirers and not subjects, no ethics approval was needed for this project. The project was also set up as an ungraded in-class activity and students could contribute as much or as little as they wanted at each stage of the project. All had final say on the content of the paper and all agreed to publication in *JELIS*. Although publication was a final goal for the project, the process of the project and what is learned during that process should be the focus for both students and instructor (Mauer, 2017).

Deciding author order is one of the major ethical considerations for collaborate student research (Barretta-Herman & Garrett, 2000; Mauer, 2017). The class agreed to author order based on amount of work contributed, including the instructor. Since students were relatively equal in skill, those who worked on the paper post-course were listed first in alphabetical order followed by those who only contributed during class time.

The Role of the Instructor

The instructor's role is largely as facilitator and editor. Although I was a PhD in LIS student at the time, I made all efforts to remove my influence on the content of the paper and the ideas expressed by the students. However, to a certain extent it does include my viewpoints and language as the creator and director of both the course and the project. As the logical person to

see the project successfully through publication, this project did require a considerable amount of time, organization, and editing work during and after the course.

4. Discussion

The value of this project is that the benefits to students extend beyond the classroom in tangible ways. Unlike most project-based assignments assigned to students during their MLIS, this project resulted in a product that was evaluated and recognized by the greater professional community. This is an assignment that can be added to a student's curriculum vitae as a professional document. The project as a whole was also an important invitation for students to add their voice to their education, a task that is typically reserved for faculty.

The main challenge with this project was organizing students and contacting them after the course had finished. Students are not obligated to contribute to the paper after the course finishes, and so the instructor must rely upon a few volunteers or do tasks themselves as necessary. It is critical that each student supply a current e-mail address so that they can receive updates or take action when needed.

Although the published paper is relatively new and in short communication format, it has had some measurable impact. This paper has been used in at least two MLIS courses, including a required Foundations of LIS course, to guide students in social justice efforts. It was also cited in *The Reference Journal* by [removed for review] (2019) in their paper "[removed for review]". This is evidence that the project was successful in its aim to motivate change through the education of future LIS professionals.

5. Conclusion

Facilitating student-authored papers in the LIS classroom has benefits for student learning, professional development, and advancements in LIS education. With the addition of online teaching tools such as Google Drive and Survey Monkey, these projects can be feasible and experientially rich as in-class activities. Student-authored papers also have an important place in research on LIS education as one way to include the student voice in the curriculum that guides their careers.

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