

Global Kids' Edge Project: A Report

**expanding the capacity of civic and cultural institutions
in the educational use of digital media**

2009-2011



Introduction

The Edge Project was an initiative of Global Kids, Inc., funded by the MacArthur Foundation. It aimed to expand the capacity of civic and cultural institutions to use digital media as innovative educational platforms that engage youth in learning and promote youth civic participation.

More specifically, the Edge Project was interested in civic and cultural institutions bringing cutting-edge digital media into their youth educational programs. It was equally interested in where this type of programming can be a disruptive force challenging the educators and/or the institutional cultural to work on the edge of their comfort level.

At the end of the day, we wanted to better understand the following question: How do institutions find their balance working on this edge?

Global Kids' Edge Projects explored this and other questions over two years (2009-2011) through a series of short-term educational programs developed and implemented in partnership with a variety of national civic and cultural institutions that are exemplars within their communities of practice:

- The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library (Charlotte, NC)
- Dane County Jail (Madison, WI)
- The Field Museum (Chicago, IL)
- Jail North (Charlotte, NC)
- Madison Public Library (Madison, WI)
- MOUSE (NY, NY)
- The Museum For African Art (NY, NY)
- The New York Public Library (NY, NY)
- The Noguchi Museum (NY, NY)
- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, D.C.)

This report will offer the following:

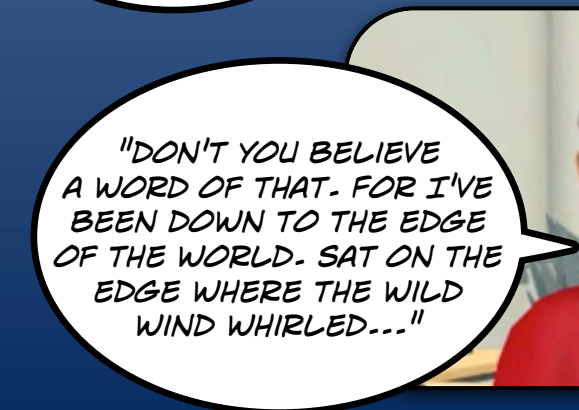
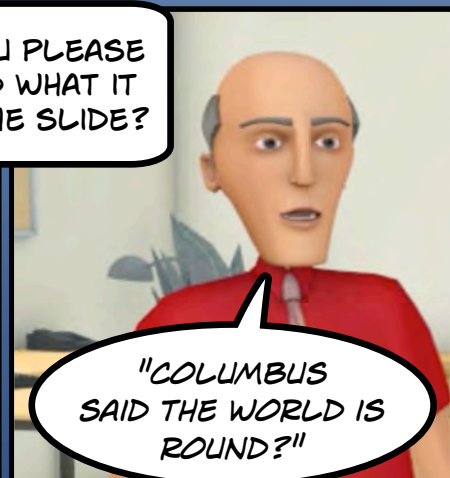
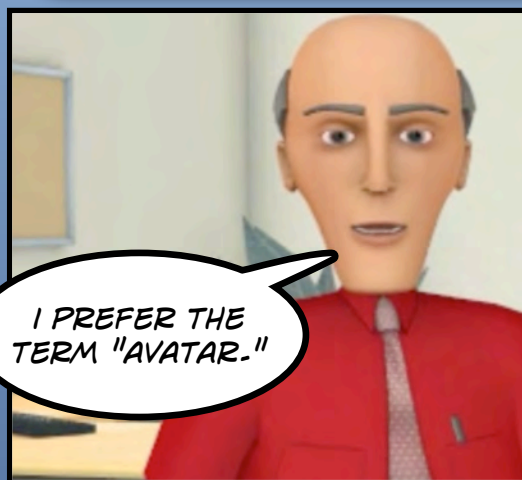
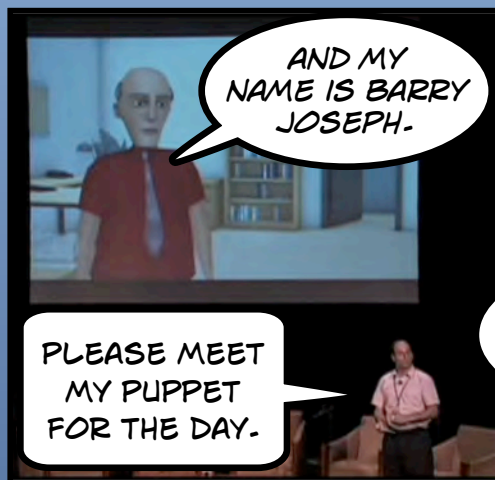
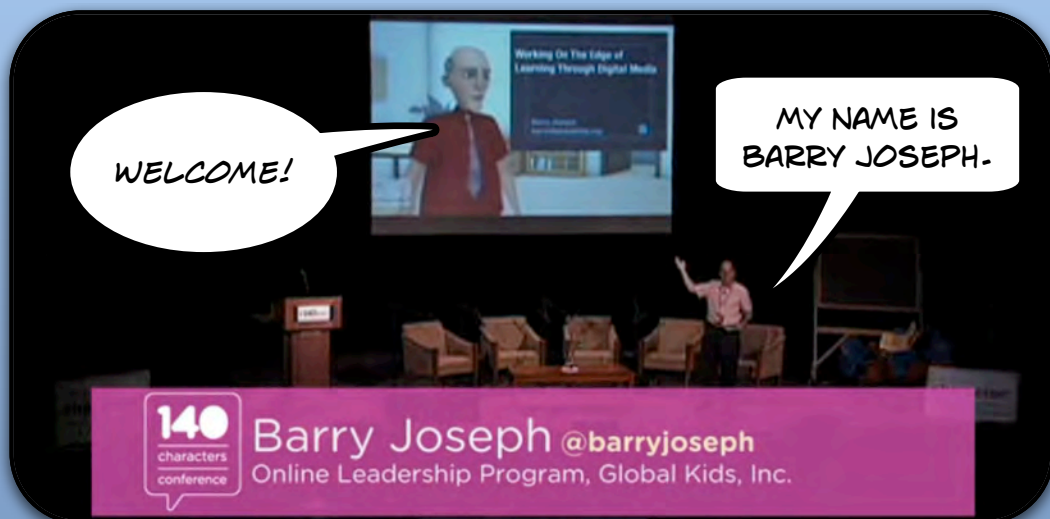
- An introduction to the key ideas behind the Edge Projects
- A brief summary of the projects
- An In-depth looks into three of the projects:
 - Leveraging Digital Media to Create a Participatory Learning Culture Among Incarcerated Youth
 - How Using Social Media Forced a Library to Work on the Edge in Their Efforts to Move Youth From “Hanging Out” to “Messing Around”
 - Digital Media and Learning at The Noguchi Museum: Introducing 21st Century Technology into a 20th Century Space
- An Appendix offering background information

Global Kids would like to thank all of the organizational partners who took the personal and professional risks to participate in this innovative project, challenging themselves and their colleagues in the process, and the MacArthur Foundation for having faith in our ability to network with a broad range of civic and cultural institutions towards developing their capacity for digital media and learning.

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IN AUGUST 2011,
GLOBAL KIDS
PRESENTED ON THE
EDGE PROJECTS AT
A CONFERENCE IN
NYC. IT LOOKED A
LITTLE LIKE THIS---



NO. I MEANT READ WHAT IT SAYS ON THE SIGN.





Thank you. What we'd like to talk about today is the work we've been exploring at Global Kids, which we like to call...

... *The Edge Project* ...



... or ...

... *Edge Work*.



But, to provide context, let's go back to 1997.

It was man versus machine, in a battle for the ages!



It was Garry Kasparov, chess grandmaster, versus IBM's Deep Blue.

I think we all know who won.



And for the first time, a computer beat a top chess master at his own game.

The New York Times article opened with: "In brisk and brutal fashion, the I.B.M. computer Deep Blue unseated humanity, at least temporarily..."





"If it ever played professionally," Kasparov said at the press conference...

"I personally guarantee you I will tear it to pieces."



Eight years later, however, he had a change of heart. He held an open chess tournament, open to both grandmasters and novices.

Computers competed, not against humans...



But alongside them. And the winner was not a Grandmaster...

... or the fastest computer. But...



... the combination ...



... of some ordinary players with ordinary machines.

What won the day were those who knew how to integrate computer advice with their own chess playing knowledge-- those for whom the use of a computer seamlessly extended and enhanced their capabilities.



Reflecting on this, Wired Magazine columnist Clive Thompson points out, computers are nothing short of miraculous.

They allow us to work faster, harder, expanding our minds into new realms of efficacy.



In the realm of education, digital media clearly is a powerful and essential tool for developing today's learners to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

However, computer fluency is not equally accessible. Not everyone feels confident troubleshooting technical problems...



... or teaching themselves how to use the latest interface, application, or social network.

For many, computers are not an enhancement but...



... an irritant. Rather than enhance their lives, giving them new powers, they are seen...

... as an endless source of frustration, a bottomless pit...

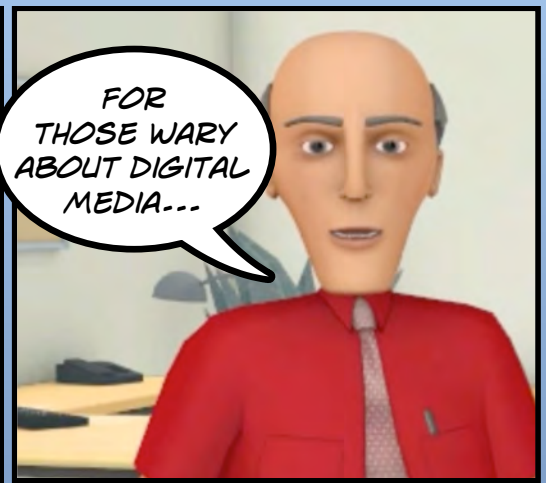
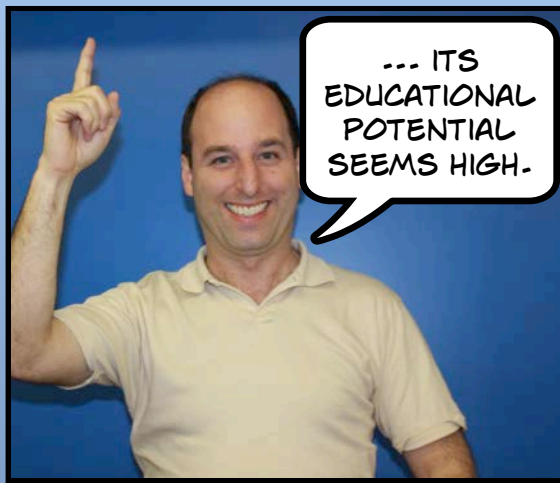
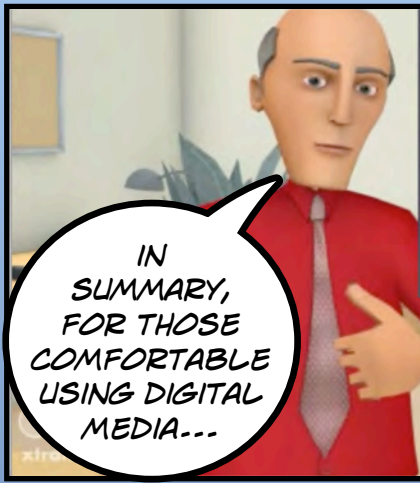


... sucking up their time, an in-box whose list of email can never be completed.

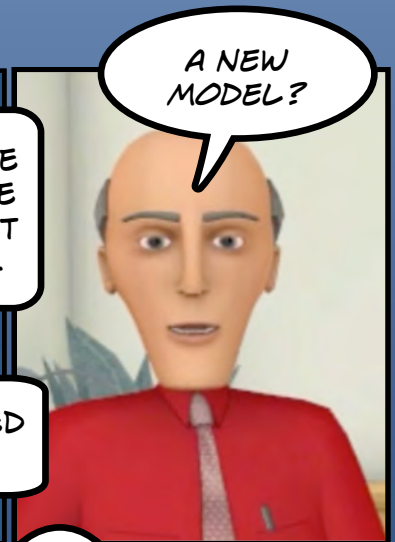
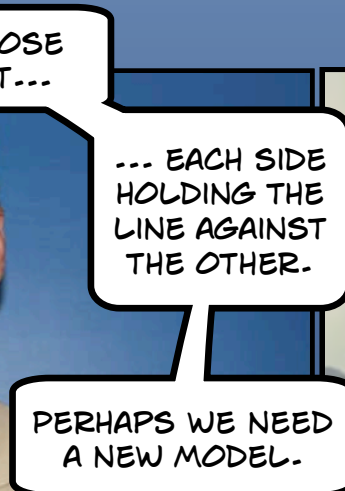
For educators like this, it is self-evident that digital media is a distraction...



...from the real learning essential to be successful in school, work and the civic sphere.



THE GAP BETWEEN THESE TWO CAN DEFINE THE CHALLENGE POSED BY TODAY'S EDUCATORS WHEN FACED WITH THE QUESTION OF WHAT ROLE DIGITAL MEDIA SHOULD PLAY WITHIN THEIR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS...



YES. ONE THAT RECOGNIZES BOTH THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF INCORPORATING DIGITAL MEDIA INTO YOUTH PROGRAMS.





Within each institution there are forces advancing the use of digital media and, at the same time, forces constraining them.

This may play out at the level of pedagogy, within the IT infrastructure...



...regarding the existing culture and practices of the institution...

...or amongst individual educators. However, one interest isn't any more valid or correct...



...than any other. Digital media can be, to use the language of Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen...

...a disruptive innovation...



...a force that challenges how markets operate and causes us to re-assess our metrics for success. And these challenges are real.

They challenge institutional budgets, the comfort level of educators untrained in these new tools, and...



... the very definition of learning.

Get ready for the climax.





When the forces advancing the use of digital media run into the constraining forces, we refer to this as...

...“the edge”. We contend that every educator...



...every educator...

...from the most wired to the most proudly luddite, whether in schools, after-school programs, museums or libraries, is working on this edge. Their edge points may be different...



...and they might respond to them in different ways...

...but what they all hold in common, where they all need similar support, is where they work on the edge...



...the edge of digital media and learning. And this edge is not like the outside of a record, where an outer edge tries to change the core.

It is more like where the ocean of potential within digital media and learning crashes upon the beach of hard reality.



A little over the top, perhaps, but I can see that.

But, at the end of the day, who cares?





Yeah, why is this relevant?

I'll tell you why. It means that advancing the effective use by educators of digital media is not about bringing those challenged by technology into the "wired" camp.



It is about building the capacity of all institutions, regardless of their skills and comfort level, to define and work on their edge.

Take for example Diffusion of Innovation research.



Diffusion of innovation? Hey, we never discussed this.

Popularized in a 1962 book of the same name, this theory was introduced by Everett Rogers, a Sociology professor.



When did you find the time to read this stuff?

Researchers like Everett are interested in, amongst other things, studying the rate of adoption of innovation, such as farmers using genetically modified seeds.



You're taking out charts now?

THIS CHART SHOWS THE TIME OF ADOPTION



THOSE ON THE LEFT WERE CLOSER TO THE POINT OF ADOPTION WHILE THOSE TO THE RIGHT WERE THE MOST DELAYED: A LOW RISING BLUE LINE OF INNOVATORS, FOLLOWED BY EARLY ADOPTERS AND A HIGH RISE OF EARLY AND LATE MAJORITY, THEN FALLING OFF WITH THE LAGGARDS.

SEE....

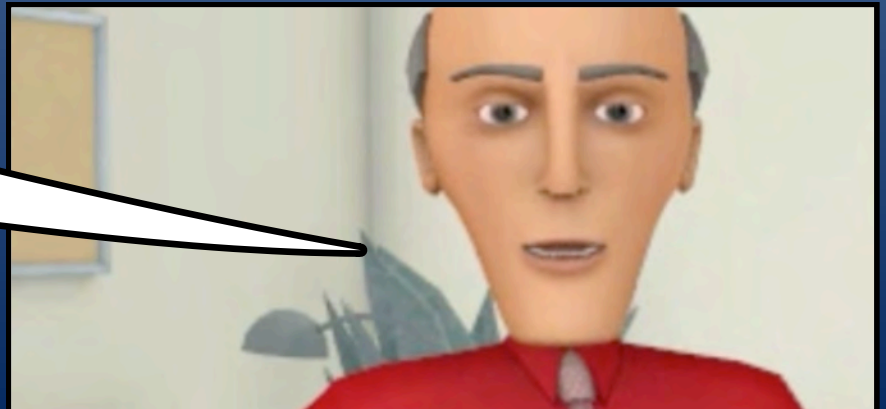
THAT'S BEEN MY POINT. I'M GLAD YOU BROUGHT THIS UP.



THIS PRIVILEGES THOSE WHO ADOPT FIRST. THE FIRST TO LAUNCH A WEB SITE. THE FIRST TO USE GAMES-BASED LEARNING.

WHO WANTS TO BE CALLED A "LAGGARD"?

WELL, THAT'S NOT THEIR POINT.





BUT IT'S MINE.
AND, SHOULD BE YOURS!

WITHIN ANY INSTITUTION WE OFTEN END UP
WITH EARLY ADOPTERS FEELING SUPERIOR
TO THOSE WHO FEEL THEY CAN'T CATCH UP.



THAT'S RIGHT.

CREATING TENSION?



AND POCKETS OF RESISTANCE WHERE
THERE COULD BE COLLABORATION.



THAT DOESN'T
SOUND HEALTHY.

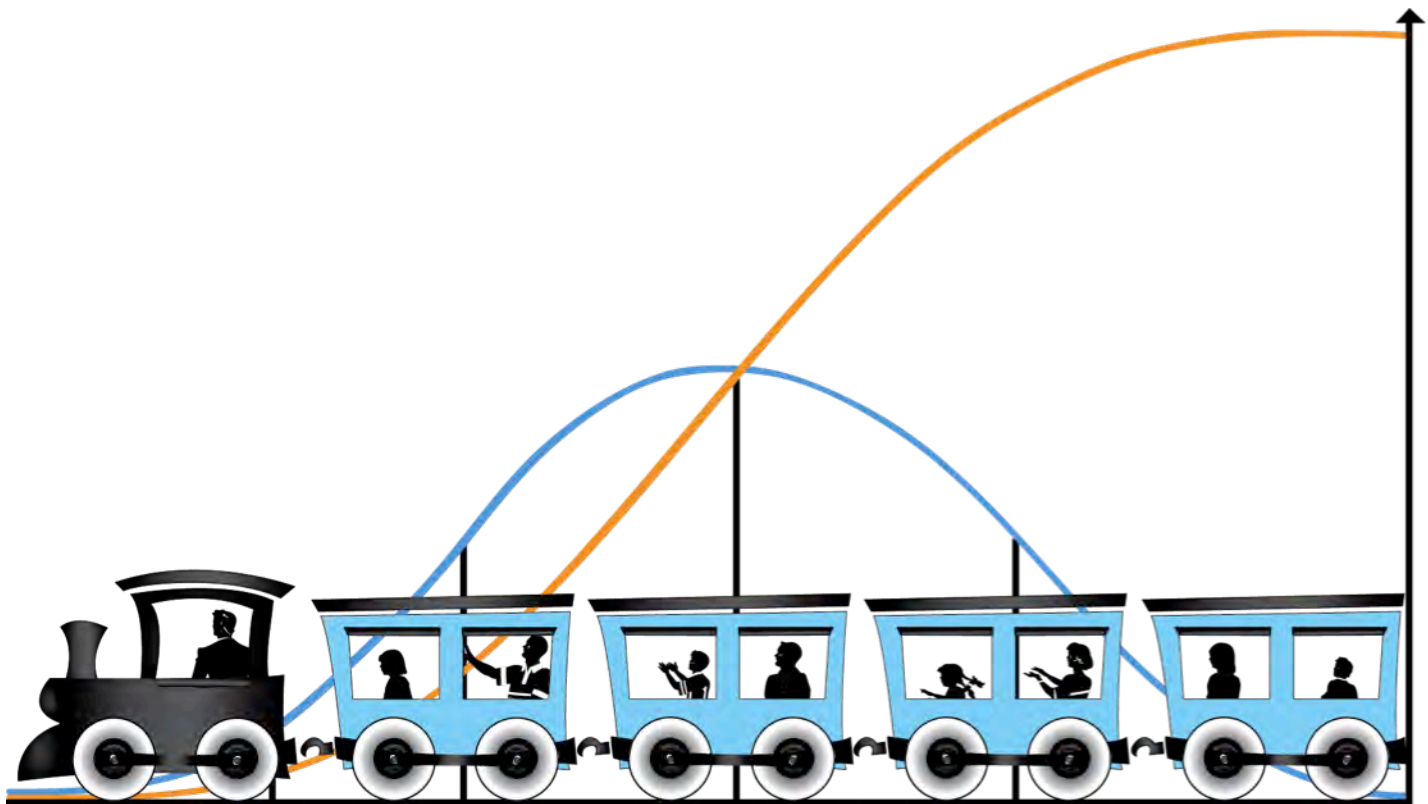


THAT'S WHY WE ARE PROPOSING A DIFFERENT MODEL,
WHICH WE CAN VISUALIZE BY CHANGING YOUR GRAPH



DO TELL.

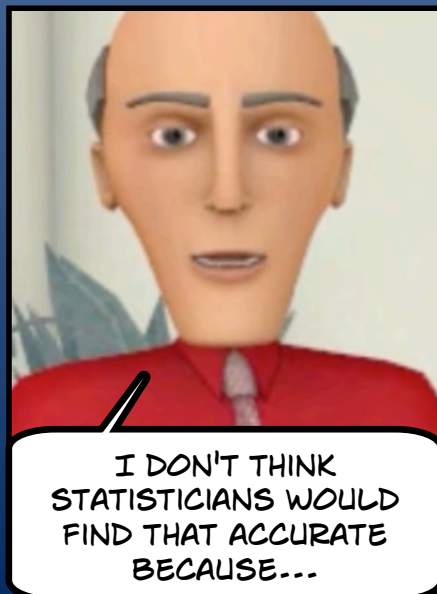
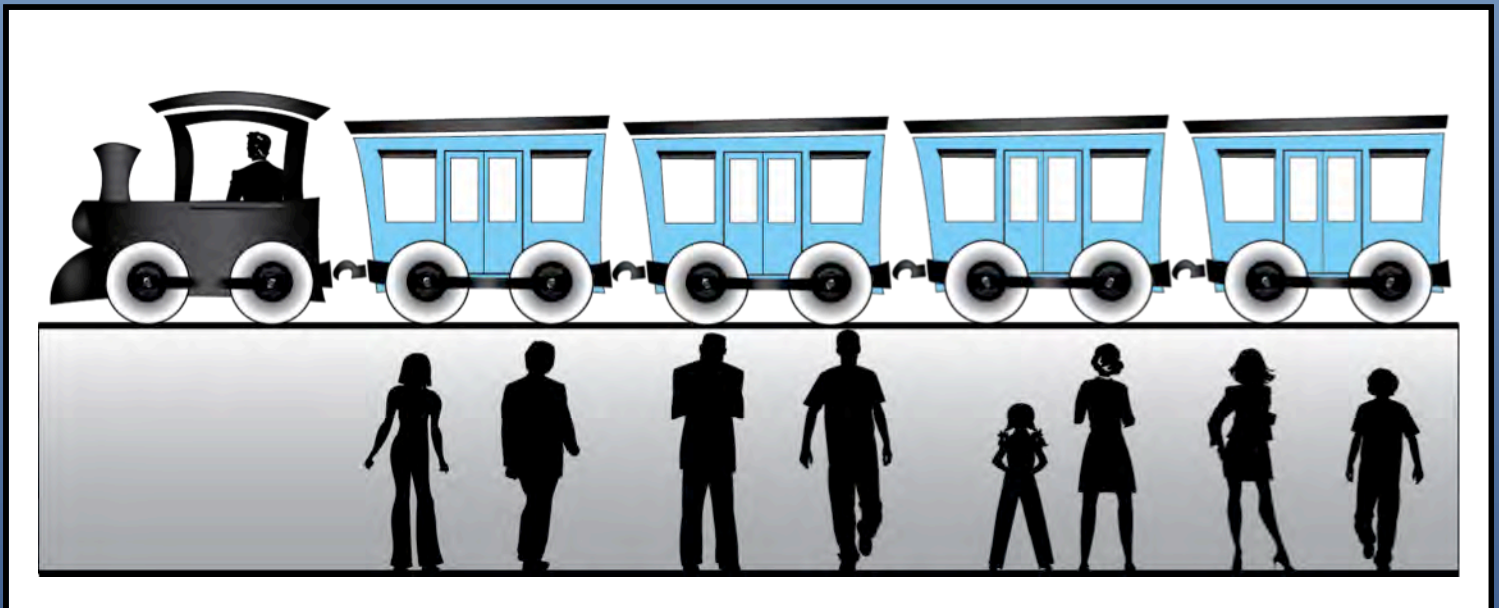
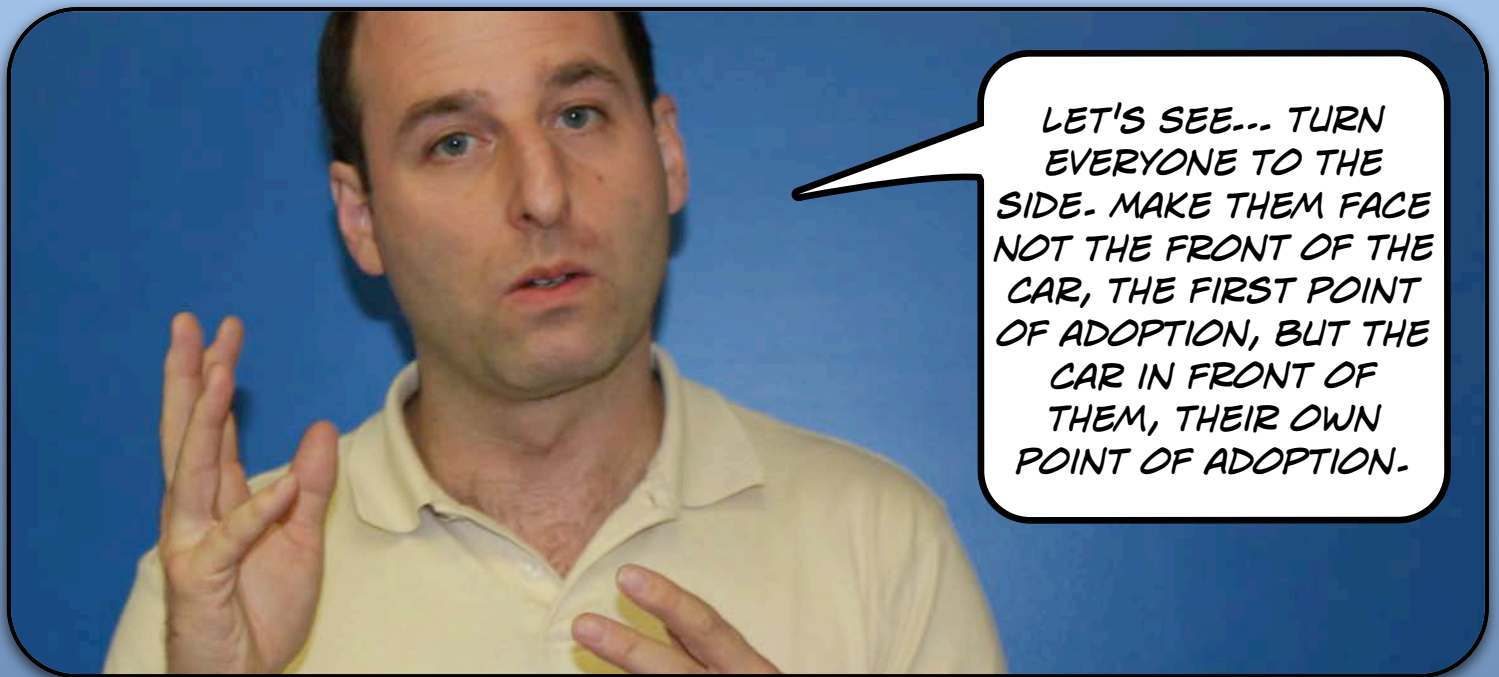
LET'S PUT PEOPLE ON THE LINE. HAVE THEM FACE TOWARDS THE TIME OF FIRST ADOPTION. AND LET'S TURN THE LINE INTO TRAIN CARS.



NOTICE THAT EVERYONE'S ATTENTION IS FORWARD, TOWARDS THE FRONT OF THE TRAIN, MEASURING THEIR PERSONAL ADOPTION AGAINST THE TIME OF THE FIRST ADOPTION.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN?





Sure, you can still choose to be snooty about it. But what is more interesting is that the distance between each adopter and that innovation train is one step, the same one step, forward and into the train.

I see. Each new traveller feels the same excitement and anxiety, the same wonder about how the trip will go and discomfort with not knowing what awaits at their final destination.



That's right. They are all on the same train, adopting the same innovation. Who does it first or last becomes somewhat irrelevant.

So edge work is about helping institutions not distinguish between its early and late adopters but treating each and every one involved as innovation adopters, albeit with their own characteristics and approaches, all taking a ride together.



For some it will be their first trip.

For seasoned travellers it will be one after many.



But for all of them, the question should be: where do you want to go next?

What if someone doesn't want to get off their train once it arrives, but take it to a new destination?



Hmm? Perhaps that takes us back to Christianson.

How so?





Let's say the innovation we are talking about is launching your organizational web site.

Well, everyone has done that.



Yes, but not once upon a time. Some organizations took that innovation train awhile ago, some only recently.

But that distinction is not relevant to us?



Right. All we care about is whether or not they have.

And if they have, the question becomes whether they want to spend more time on that train...



... a sustaining innovation, learning how to broaden the impact of that innovation...

...or decide what train they want to take next...



...a disruptive innovation, deciding what new innovation they want to take on.

And the Edge Project cares about the later?



That's right. Regardless of how many trips they have taken, whether or not they were seasoned travelers, this work aims to focus on helping folks identify what their next trip might look like...

...perhaps, becoming more seasoned travellers along the way?



Sure. Why not? Learning to become more comfortable with the disruptions of innovation, becoming more confident and skilled travelers on the adoption innovation train. So let's start to get into the details.

Most recently, with support from the MacArthur Foundation...



...we have developed techniques for identifying how the educational impact of a particular digital tool is advanced...

...or constrained...



...by a variety of forces. We are not interested in helping civic and cultural institutions just use more digital media.

We want to help people use it more effectively.



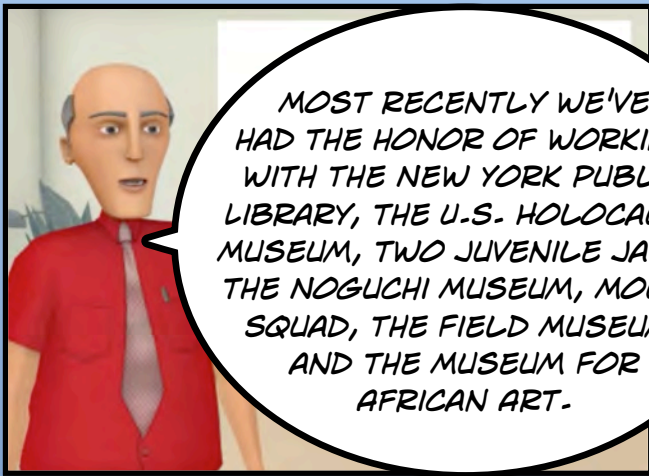
More specifically, our efforts at Global Kids have focused on where cutting edge digital media practices...

...introduced into youth educational programs...



... Become a disruptive innovation, challenging the educators and/or the institutional culture to work on the edge of their comfort level.





MOST RECENTLY WE'VE HAD THE HONOR OF WORKING WITH THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, THE U.S. HOLOCAUST MUSEUM, TWO JUVENILE JAILS, THE NOGUCHI MUSEUM, MOUSE SQUAD, THE FIELD MUSEUM, AND THE MUSEUM FOR AFRICAN ART.



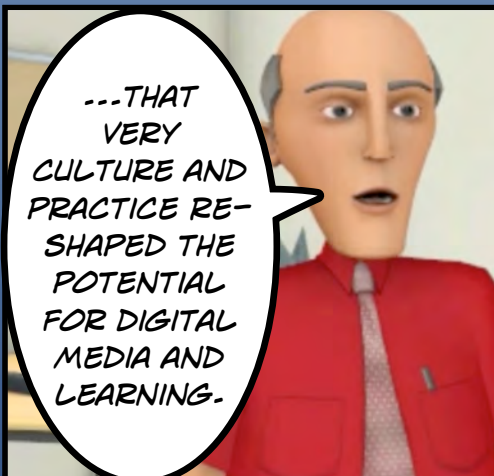
THESE INSTITUTIONS HAVE VASTLY DIFFERENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH DIGITAL MEDIA BUT THEY ALL TOOK ON THE SAME CHALLENGE:



TO IDENTIFY AND WORK ON THEIR EDGE. TO DO THIS THEY HAD TO EACH PERFORM A BALANCING ACT...



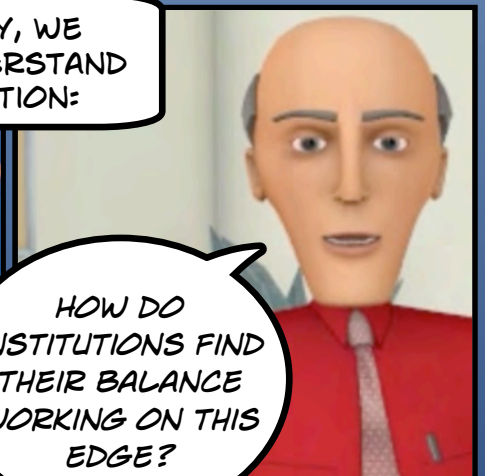
...AS NEW MEDIA CHALLENGED THEIR EDUCATIONAL CULTURE AND PRACTICE WHILE, IN TURN...



...THAT VERY CULTURE AND PRACTICE RE-SHAPED THE POTENTIAL FOR DIGITAL MEDIA AND LEARNING.



AT THE END OF THE DAY, WE WANTED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:



HOW DO INSTITUTIONS FIND THEIR BALANCE WORKING ON THIS EDGE?

SO, WHAT IS YOUR EDGE POINT?

WHERE WOULD USING DIGITAL MEDIA FOR LEARNING CHALLENGE YOU TO PUSH AGAINST YOUR COMFORT ZONE? AGAINST YOUR INSTITUTION'S COMFORT ZONE?

AND WHAT SUPPORT WOULD YOU NEED TO WORK ON THAT EDGE?

GK's Edge Project Overview

Global Kids' Edge Project ran over two years (2009-2011) through a series of seven short-term educational projects developed and implemented in partnership with a variety of national civic and cultural institutions that are exemplars within their communities of practice.

These demonstration projects were designed for these institutions to challenge themselves to incorporate one specific form of digital media into their ongoing youth programs and to do so in a way that built upon the organization's existing strengths and interests. In addition, the program designs were geared towards addressing the specific needs of the organization and its constituencies while highlighting how the organization can serve as a leader offering a model from which others within their professional networks might learn.

While there is a wide range of new media practice within civic and cultural institutions, the Edge Project deliberately selected a common set of criteria for its programs which could distinguish it from other initiatives and contextualize findings. The primary site of learning were not online but in person, facilitated by an adult within the institution. The programs were informed by youth development and youth media pedagogies. Finally, the program designs focused less on scale and breadth and more on innovation and depth with the understanding that developing good theory through iterative practice is just the first step towards scalable designs.

The following is a brief summary of the projects:

- Two libraries partnered with each other and two local youth jails to support collaboration amongst incarcerated youth using social media tools (The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library & Jail North in North Carolina and the Madison Public Library & Dane County Jail in Madison, Wisconsin).
- The New York Public Library offered a program at three sites that supported youth to address critical public issues through personal and collaborative social media projects while earning digital badges throughout the process.
- The Field Museum in Chicago challenged the structure of their existing virtual world-based, paleontological-themed youth program.
- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum ran a youth program in which youth combined video production and virtual world engagement to address a recent hate crime at the museum.
- MOUSE in New York City prototyped a new blended learning environment to support youth to develop social-impact game design skills.
- The Noguchi Museum in New York City explored for the first time how they could support their teen advisory board to use digital media to promote the museum.
- The Museum For African Art, while awaiting the opening of their new space, used online tools to support youth to learn the history, culture and art of Nigeria.

Some of the projects hit their marks ("It was incredibly successful") while others, frankly, failed to live up to initial hopes ("I'd say we barely met our original expectations"). All, however, offered valuable learning to the participating institutions regarding working on their edge points of digital media and learning.

For example, The United States Holocaust Museum experienced "scope creep" within their project, in

which the goals shifted over time and increased the workload for both youth and staff in ways previously unanticipated. “It quickly became apparent that the staff running the project, as well as the youth participating in it, were overwhelmed by their additional responsibilities.” This led to program design lessons that could be implemented in the future.

However, regarding their “edge point,” they also learned valuable lessons:

What really jumped out for me was that it was the first time we had encouraged youth to expand their role as ambassadors from face-to-face interactions into a more global interaction via social media. This really challenged us to think about the implications inherent in youth acting as ambassadors on a global stage mediated by technology that adds a touch of permanence to their voice. We were challenged to negotiate authenticity of student voice with the official voice and interests of the institution in a way that is not as prominent with onsite, live programs.

The staff at Museum for African Art learned lessons as well, about themselves. “Through this process I realized that I knew more about digital technologies that I thought and our learning curve was not as steep as anticipated.” Their edge was rather unique from the others within the project: as their new museum space was still in development, they had no space. They could not use their main assets to educate youth, their collections, but could instead learn how to use digital media to incorporate resources from the Internet and support youth to contribute their own:

The program was a pilot to develop and deliver a program to engage youth in the arts of Africa incorporating the use of digital media.... The program couldn’t have come at a better time for the Museum for African Art. Through the Edge Project, we were able to work with youth directly which is shaping both the design of [future] programs and the planning for the [new] space and [its] technical needs. Being able to work with the Global Kids staff with more familiarity with digital program and having access to the technology has helped us become familiar with how to utilize technology in our afterschool programs. We now have video pieces that we can adapt and share with the general public and funders.

At the end of the day, perhaps more than anything else, the participating institutions were most concerned about the educational impact of the youth in their programs. When we asked the New York Public Library what it meant for their youth to participate in an Edge Project, they responded with the following, referring to a Google Map project in which the youth documented global human rights abuses: “When the teens investigated genocide, one of them remarked “You hear about this, but now that I’m thinking about it and working on it, my mind is blown.”

Rather than explore all seven of the projects, or attempt to offer universal best practices, we are going to focus on three of the collaborations and investigate them using something called Worked Examples. Worked Examples are a new approach to scholarship pertaining to digital media and learning practices. The purpose behind them are best articulated by James Paul Gee in his March, 2010 report from the MacArthur Foundation, *New Digital Media and Learning as an Emerging Area* and “Worked Examples” as *One Way Forward*. Those engaged with building the emerging fields of Digital Media and Learning (DML) “would publicly display their methods of valuing and thinking about a specific problem, proposing them as examples of ‘good work’ in order to engender debate about what such work in DML might come to look like and what shape the area itself might take. The goal would not be for the proposed approach to become the accepted one but for it to become fodder for new work and collaboration.”

(<http://tinyurl.com/workedexamplesreport>) As such, these are not case studies, per say, describing something the authors did which others should copy. Rather, they are more concerned with explaining why the authors did what they did, rather than how, and what they had to negotiate to get there.

The three following Worked Examples are:

Leveraging Digital Media to Create a Participatory Learning Culture Among Incarcerated Youth

This worked example will explore how one collaboration, within and among youth at two youth jails, sought to create a participatory culture while negotiating the edge point where the potential of digital media and learning ran into conflict with existing cultural practices and norms.

How Using Social Media Forced a Library to Work on the Edge in Their Efforts to Move Youth From “Hanging Out” to “Messing Around”

This worked example explores and takes a critical look at the obstacles encountered when implementing a social media program, how they were negotiated, and how they can be understood within Mimi Ito’s HO-MA-GO framework (“Hanging Out, Messing Around, & Geeking Out”).

Digital Media and Learning at The Noguchi Museum: Introducing 21st Century Technology into a 20th Century Space

This worked example asks an intriguing question about teen expectations for digital experiences within museum galleries, and in museum youth programs: can a museum designed for “unmediated” experiences with non-digital art such as sculpture and design support youth to produce digital media projects that embrace and further the museum’s values?

Leveraging Digital Media to Create a Participatory Learning Culture Among Incarcerated Youth

An Edge Project Worked Example, the first in a series.

Written by Barry Joseph and Kelly Czarnecki, with Jesse Vieau and Margo Fesperman

I. TOWARDS A PARTICIPATORY LEARNING CULTURE

Few would differ with the notion that all youth deserve a good education. This chapter will speak about one innovative attempt to improve the education of two groups of youth, within youth jails, through the innovative application of digital media. Are there concerns or questions already forming in your mind? If so, good, as this report is less about what we did than about the questions we too had to face, how we worked through them, and how the lessons learned might inform others similarly engaged. Before we describe the project and what we faced, we will first introduce you to the theoretical questions underlying our efforts, the unique form this report will take, and the broader initiative, which framed this one project.

In October, 2006, Henry Jenkins and colleagues helped shed light on the new hidden curriculum, powered by the informal use of digital media, creating a new divide between youth prepared with the skills required to succeed in the new century and those being left behind. The [report](#) *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* defined a participatory culture as one in which there are “relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices.” A new gap was emerging, Jenkins argued: the participation gap.

Four years later, we are no longer just focusing on questions pertaining to digital media access (e.g. the digital divide) but, increasingly, inequalities in access to opportunities for participating in cultures supporting the development of these new competencies and social skills (e.g. the participation gap). Jenkins and colleagues look to afterschool programs and informal learning communities to take the lead transforming educational practices to support participatory cultural practices, given their ability to change in contrast with the resistance often found within formalized learning environments. As a participatory culture shifts the focus from one of individual expression to one of community involvement, the development of these new literacies “involve social skills developed through collaboration and networking.” Collaboration is as much a valuable tool utilized within participatory culture as a desired educational outcome. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, for example, [defines collaboration](#) as working effectively and respectfully with diverse teams, exercising flexibility and willingness to make compromises to accomplish a common goal, and assuming shared responsibility for collaborative work while valuing individual contributions.

Allan Collins and Richard Halverston’s [book](#) *Rethinking Education In the Age of Technology* offers one framework for developing such participatory cultures within afterschool programs. Within their list of the enhancements digital media offers for educating learners are “multimedia,” “publication,” and “reflection.” In short, digital media provides learners with new ways to express themselves (multimedia), share that expression with real audiences and demonstrate their learning in legitimate contexts outside the classroom (publication), and engage in meaningful reflection built into the learning environment (reflection). The Partnership for 21st Century Skills take a similar approach, promoting youth to develop the ability to create

media products which demonstrate their understanding and ability to use “the most appropriate media creation tools, characteristics and conventions.”

Afterschool programs can combine these two - collaboration and self-expression - to develop a participatory culture. Furthermore, the transition from the privacy of the program’s learning environment to a public collaboration and sharing of youth media creates new challenges and opportunities crucial for youth to learn to navigate. Jenkins and colleagues refer to this as the Ethics Challenge, resulting from “the breakdown of traditional forms of professional training and socialization that might prepare young people for their increasingly public roles as media makers and community participants.” Howard Gardner’s [GoodPlay Project](#) at Harvard, interested in digital media and ethics, values two key related literacies - privacy and participation - that arise as youth increasingly interact in public online spaces. Developing literacies related to privacy require learning “how, where and with whom we share personal information online” while developing literacies related to participation require learning “the meaning of responsible conduct and citizenship in online communities.” So, developing educational programs that leverage digital media to engage youth in collaborative and self-expressive media practices provide opportunities to develop their ethical behaviors fit for our new digital age.

But what happens when the youth in question have been judged by society to be lacking in ethical behavior, to, in fact, be incarcerated in youth jails due to crimes committed? How can a participatory culture be created within an institution where self-expression is discouraged, where the idea of collaborating with adults and fellow incarcerated youth in other jails challenges key assumptions and structural components of the institution’s culture and practices? This worked example will explore how one collaboration, within and among youth at two youth jails, sought to create a participatory culture while negotiating the edge point where the potential of digital media and learning ran into conflict with existing cultural practices and norms.

Worked Examples are a new approach to scholarship pertaining to digital media and learning practices. James Paul Gee best articulates the practice in his March 2010 report from the MacArthur Foundation, *New Digital Media and Learning as an Emerging Area and "Worked Examples" as One Way Forward*. Those engaged with building the emerging fields of Digital Media and Learning (DML) “would publicly display their methods of valuing and thinking about a specific problem, proposing them as examples of ‘good work’ in order to engender debate about what such work in DML might come to look like and what shape the area itself might take. The goal would not be for the proposed approach to become the accepted one but for it to become fodder for new work and collaboration.” (<http://tinyurl.com/workedexamplesreport>) As such, these are not case studies, per say, describing something the authors did which others should copy. Rather, they are more concerned with explaining why the authors did what they did, rather than how, and what they had to negotiate to get there.

Finally, before leering more about the actual project and getting into the details of the worked examples, some context might prove useful to understand why certain program decisions were made. This work with incarcerated youth was performed not in isolation but within a broader collection of innovative digital media programs, called The Edge Project, coordinated by Global Kids, Inc. Global Kids is a New York City-based educational non-profit that supports urban youth to become global citizens, community leaders, and successful students. The [Edge Project](#) was a [Global Kids](#) initiative funded by the MacArthur Foundation with the goal of expanding the capacity of civic and cultural institutions to use new media as innovative educational platforms that engage youth in learning and promote youth civic participation. More specifically, the Edge Project is interested in civic and cultural institutions bringing cutting edge digital media into their youth educational programs. It is equally interested in where this type of programming - due to technology, its pedagogical implications or both - is a disruptive force challenging the educators and/or the institutional cultural to work on the edge of their comfort level. There is a balancing act they

must undertake, being receptive to how new media challenges their current educational culture and practice while, in turn, challenging the educational potential of new media through interacting with that very culture and practice. At the end of the day, Global Kids seeks to better understand the following questions: how do institutions find their balance working on this edge and do different types of institutions respond in different ways?

When writers considering innovation speak about an “edge,” they often mean the periphery -- the outer ring of a circle. The edge is the only space where reform can begin, as in John Hagel and John Seely Brown's assertion: "To transform the core, start at the edge." We, however, are using the word “edge” to paint a different picture. In this project, the “edge” is the meeting point between two forces. Picture the edge where the ocean meets the beach, a line between two forces. It is an edge that is never the same from one moment to the next but is clearly defined and continually in play as forces press from either side. In our work, the ocean is the vast potential of digital media for learning, while the beach is the hard but ever shifting cultural practices and norms of institutions.

In his book *Disrupting Class*, Clayton Christensen contrasts “disruptive innovations” with “sustaining innovations.” Disruptive innovations create new markets and redefine the measure of success. Early social networking tools such as Friendster were “disruptive”, creating a demand for new ways to connect online. Sustaining innovations build on existing innovations to meet the needs of and expand current markets. Facebook was a sustaining innovation, building on and expanding the success of Friendster and MySpace. The Edge Project is most interested in supporting the former, attempting to introduce “disruptive innovations” into civic and cultural institutions, using digital media to create new relationships between youth and sites of informal learning.

While there is a wide range of new media practice within civic and cultural institutions, the Edge Project has deliberately selected a common set of criteria for its programs, which may distinguish it from other initiatives and contextualize our findings. The primary site of learning will not be online but in person, facilitated by an adult within the institutions. The programs will be informed by youth development and youth media pedagogies. Finally, the program designs will focus less on scale and breadth and more on innovation and depth with the understanding that developing good theory through iterative practice is just the first step towards scalable designs.

The Edge Project explored these questions over two years (2009-2011) through a series of short-term educational projects developed and implemented in partnership with a variety of national civic and cultural institutions that are exemplars within their communities of practice. These demonstration projects were designed to challenge institutions to incorporate one specific form of digital media into their ongoing youth programs and to do so in a way that builds upon the organization's existing strengths and interests. In addition, the program designs were geared to address the specific needs of the organization and its constituencies, and to highlight how the organization serves as a leader within their professional networks whose work in this area can provide a model from which others can learn. The projects all aimed to conclude with at least one Worked Example, such as this, to explore how each went to their “edge” to support learning through digital media.

The first Edge Project was named uCreate.

2. UCREATE

uCreate was the first completed Edge Project and took place within two jail facilities in the U.S. While most states have separate juvenile detention and adult jails, North Carolina treats 16 and 17 years olds as

adults within the judicial system. Therefore, they can be held within adult jails for pretrial detention but are housed in separate youthful offender sections. In Madison, Wisconsin, however, youth 16 and younger are held in separate facilities and treated as minors.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/margopreailvsprison.mp3>

Margo describes the difference between a youth jail and a prison.

Libraries and library services offered at juvenile detention centers, jails, or prisons serve some of the same purposes as public libraries do in our communities. Empowering people through access to information, whether it be fiction, law books, videos, or audiobooks, is a key goal of the library. Advancing knowledge and expanding minds through resources that people might not otherwise be exposed to in their schools or at home is another important mission of many libraries. Most public libraries also provide technology access, whether it is through video gaming, robotics, Internet, or movie creation. Libraries serving the incarcerated population also help to give people something productive and meaningful to do with their time.

While public libraries can help toward keeping many people off the streets, especially teens, by offering afterschool activities, jail and prison libraries can provide materials that bring people's minds to a place other than their current situation which may help ease stress, boredom, and pressure. As one participant in the uCreate program wrote, "Well I really like what we are doing its a chance to get out of the cell block." (KB, February 18, 2010).



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/kellywhyatjail.mp3>

Kelly describes how she found herself working in a youth jail.

In development from November 2009 through January 2010, uCreate ran for six weeks between February and March 2010. Young adult males, ages 16-19, met twice a week, from 9 a.m.-11 a.m., within their facilities. Global Kids, Inc., centered in New York City, had a collaborative history with the [Charlotte Mecklenburg Library](#) in Charlotte, NC that, in turn, had collaborated with the library staff within a local facility, [Jail North](#). For over a year, the three partners had used the virtual world of Teen Second Life, in a project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, to support youth in Jail North to develop social entrepreneurial skills.

When Global Kids approached the librarians about a follow-up project, they recommended the project expand to include the [Madison Public Library](#) in Madison, Wisconsin, who shared a similar relationship with their local youth jail, the [Dane County Jail](#). With the second jail on board, it became clear that the program could leverage collaboration as both a powerful incentive for participation and a key component of the intended educational outcome. Efforts to bring in other jail systems, however, fell short. For example, while numerous individuals throughout the New York City juvenile justice system expressed great interest - from the youth jail on Riker's Island to staff at half-way houses - policies that prevent youth from accessing the Internet or even computers, under any circumstance, made their "edge" impossible to work around.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/jesseprediffbtwn2locations.mp3>

Jesse distinguishes between the two locations: Madison has a classroom context and selected youth are required to attend, while North Carolina requires recruitment efforts and youth buy-in.

In the end, there were seven youth ages 18 and 19 in the uCreate program at Jail North. At the end of the six weeks, that number dropped to three (some due to losing interest in the program, taking a work study class that conflicted with the time of uCreate, or being sent to another jail during the program). At the Dane County Jail, there were three youth ages 16 and 18 and all three stayed the length of the program.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/margopretargeting18-19.mp3>

Margo describes the difference between 17 year old and 18 year old offenders.

The plan was always to work with incarcerated youth to develop their digital media skills in order to tell personal stories about critical choices they have faced. The specific educational objectives, the required digital media to meet them, and the exact nature of how youth would collaborate within and amongst the jails to bring a participatory culture into the jail library, however, was an evolving conversation that took many turns and changed many times in the lead up to, and even during, the program. Through weekly phone conferences and the use of Google docs, the curriculum was jointly created, and helped bring the theme and focus together along with what software, hardware, and other resources would be used to accomplish each task. In addition, the curriculum was flexible enough that the facilitators at each site were able to modify the workshops to meet the needs of their site, either in advance or during the program.

The use of digital media typically involves sharing, collaborating, and expressing oneself publicly. Because of the constraints in place at the jail facilities, this wasn't always possible. However, we were often able to navigate around those boundaries and modify the program so that it would fit the needs of the jail and allow the participants to still use various digital media.

It was anticipated that most, though not all, of the participants in uCreate would return to the community after serving their sentence.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/kellyscreenyouth.mp3>

Kelly describes how they chose what youth to recruit for the program.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/marypostyouthmadebadchoices.mp3>

Mary on when youth can't attend, because in a program about choices, they made bad ones

The following three examples will each highlight one form of youth media produced in the program, define the edge points which emerged as pedagogies and practices that came into conflict, and explore how those points were negotiated. These edge points tended to form around two sets of forces, the specifics of which will be detailed within the examples.

In general, however, one set of forces encouraged the use of digital media for learning. These included pedagogies and cultures found within public libraries, youth media practices, and Global Kids, which, in a general sense, aim to empower youth through the critical consumption of digital media and its production. The second set of forces constrained the use of digital media for learning. These included the jail's need to maintain control over the lives of the inmates within their care, the youth's needs to successfully navigate the judicial system, and the youth's needs to not create a digital trail which would unintentionally follow them, and potentially harm them, later in their lives. This conflict should not be viewed as description of a good side versus a bad, of progressive versus regressive forces. Rather, this is simply a description of the interplay of a variety of institutions and its players, each trying to meet their own desires and objectives, and what happens when digital media and learning gets caught up within its web.

2A. PRE-PROGRAM INTERVIEW

The following is an interview with the key members of the uCreate Team. They were interviewed, via survey, before the start of the program, in November 2009 & January 2010. Their independent responses were combined into a collective response below. The team members are:

- Kelly Czarnecki, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
- Jesse Vieau & Mary Driscoll, Madison Public Library / Dane County Library Service
- Margo Fesperman, Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office (Jail North)
- Beth Murray, ImaginOn

What is your institution's history in using new media and/or technology for education?

JESSE VIEAU & MARY DRISCOLL: It is rather limited in the use of new, state-of-the-art technologies. The past few years we have seen some shift toward the newer online technologies and there is definitely interest and support within the library system.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/jesseprelibrariesforced.mp3>

Jesse describes why libraries have been forced to change.

KELLY CZARNECKI: Using new media at ImaginOn, which is a branch of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, is really a core part of our job. We work to help make our resources and ideas available to the rest of the system (24 branches) and the rest of the community we serve.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/kellypersonalhistory.mp3>

Kelly describes her personal history using digital media

BETH MURRAY: ImaginOn aims to be a "flagship" of the library system and a figure in the nation with respect to serving children and teens. This, of course isn't uniform across the institution . . . but the intention is part of the culture. Knowledge lives in individuals and pockets of collaboration right now. There is support for capacity building, but that relies on individual prioritization, comfort and expertise. It's exciting to be in that environment. However, sometimes there are historic habits that work against the idealistic intentions . . . libraries have been around a while. We're lucky to have passionate, knowledgeable advocates in our midst.

MARGO FESPERMAN: From within the traditional classroom [in the jail], Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) and community college for GED, very little. There are some computer-based learning modules. However, the library is a more open learning space. Media and technology we have used include: video games, online scrabble, iPods, Second Life, blogging, podcasting 101, Scratch webpage design, iTunesU and the Wii.

How does this project fit within the larger direction of your organization?

MARGO: Although the purpose of the jail is to detain persons within the criminal justice system, the administration is more interested in preparing people of all ages to return to the community as productive citizen. In the last year, there has been a major shift to focus on reentry. Through library programs we strive to motivate students to be 21st century learners using real world technology so they can return successfully to society.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/margoprerooleoflibrary.mp3>

Margo on the role of the library within the jail

KELLY: Our strategic programming focuses for this year are literacy, civic engagement, and workforce development. I think the digital media tools we allow the youth to access as part of this project will definitely target those initiatives.

JESSE/MARY: Libraries certainly aim to embrace new technologies and are interested in providing services to the under-served. Working with youth in detention centers not only helps them immediately but also aims to create a lasting relationship with the public library as a resource once they are released.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/marypreexistingpractices.mp3>

Mary describes another program that gives free mp3 players to incarcerated youth

BETH: We serve young people. We're all about civic engagement, literacy, and workforce development on the library side of our partnership. We're all about access and innovation as well. This project hits everything. This project also builds on history. There is a standing and growing programmatic relationship between the library and the jail. How are the unique strengths or attributes of your institution shaping the design of the program and how it's incorporating new media and/or technology within educational settings?

MARGO: The top down support beginning with the sheriff is essential for successful programs. Additionally, MCSO is a very large facility and consequently receive substantial state and federal funding. Thus, in even tight times we have been fortunate to continue to move forward. Although safety and security during detention, is the primary purpose of the jail, it is not used as a deterrent to progressive thinking. CMS as an institution introduces little technology but administrators are open to innovations from the public library outreach in the jail and from within MCSO itself.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/margopremixedagepopulation.mp3>

Margo on the challenges of serving youth in a mixed-age population and how technology fits in

KELLY: ImaginOn has a lot of the technology resources and knowledge on how to use them. When we're able to partner with Jail North with that combination, I think it helps the larger community recognize that we're involved to help make a positive impact when the youth leave the Jail North facility.

BETH: We have more freedom than schools. We can pilot things more easily than most youth-serving organizations, because we're expected to always have new things to try. We are awarded and recognized for our innovation . . . and risk-taking. Sometimes more nationally than locally. :) We serve a richly diverse community and are trying to be really realistic about WHO that really is and how to do it well. Our building is a magnet for ideas and collaboration and people who want to serve and engage young people.

What attitudes, capabilities and expectations are required by your program from you (or the staff person working directly with the youth) for it to succeed?

JESSE/MARY: We are expecting a certain amount of time from each member's schedule to be devoted to the planning of the program and the presentation of the program itself. Attitudes would require an open mind, innovative atmosphere, extreme flexibility, and not being afraid to fail. We will need to be open to the student's reactions, as they will play a major role in shaping the program to best fit each site. The program will most likely not play out exactly how we picture it in our minds.

MARGO: To be open-minded, flexible, in-touch with young adult attitudes, and some awareness of technology.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/margopretechexpert.mp3>

Margo on being the reluctant tech expert and on technology and learning



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/margopregetsapproved.mp3>

Margo on knowing what will get approved and what not to ask for programmatically

BETH: Flexibility, innovation, collaboration, a sense of youth-centered-ness, curiosity, willingness to always learn--and to learn in front of youth, capacity building, assessment sensibility, partnership building, program development, community engagement, awareness of social justice and necessary advocacy, problem solving . . . and a sense of fun

KELLY: Lots of patience. Sometimes because of the institutional structures using the technology can take longer than normal as the guys don't have access to it outside of this program at the present time. Because our time is so limited together it's really important to have knowledge of the technology so that it works seamlessly (or as close to as possible) when they're developing their project.

What attitudes, capabilities and expectations are required by your program from the youth for it to succeed?

MARGO: Positive attitude. Minimal technology knowledge. Cooperative. Interested in learning. Interested in altering behavior.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/margoprerecruitmentchallenge.mp3>

Margo on how she does recruitment in a jail

JESSE/MARY: Consistent attendance from both the staff and the students participating in the program. A level of respect and enthusiasm from the students.

KELLY: To give their input not based on what they think we want to hear but what they truly experience and think. A willingness to stay on task and be able to try and communicate in a variety of ways (video, podcasting, blogging, talking) is important.

BETH: Be themselves. Try. Respond, or don't . . . so we can adapt our offerings. Respect self, others, property. Be curious. Express. Question. Stretch. Reflect. What assumptions are you making about the larger learning ecologies of the youth coming into your program?

KELLY: That they have varying levels of knowledge about the technologies. That they have the ability and desire to help each other learn how to use the technologies effectively.

JESSE/MARY: That their literacy capabilities are in a lower level and may have other learning disabilities or behavior issues. Also that this program will be a sort-of privilege to the students involved. That they may not have had many positive experiences in school or with authority.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/jesseprechallengesanticipated.mp3>

Jesse and Mary speak about their hopes and expectations of the students they have

MARGO: Their learning has been very limited, coming more from the street than from classroom education. They learn, whether they're positively or negatively, from peers. They are not particularly in-touch with technology and are used to a classroom style that is very structured.

BETH: Widely varied. Rich in their own ways. Always storied. Probably mis-served at some point by a social system, like education. How will these assumptions inform your program design?

JESSE/MARY: We will be looking to dispel stereotypes that may be attached to Librarians or others in an authority role. Since we are new to them, we will have to give them some space to warm up to our presence and what we are looking to accomplish with this program. We will need clear expectations and goals for each meeting and the program as a whole.

MARGO: We must recognize they have less experience with the larger picture of the world, yet our expectations for them to learn and succeed will not be lowered.

BETH: The participants are the heart. We can only plan so far before they help guide us. In contexts like this, my approach is to be highly prepared, highly flexible and engagement sensitive. They need success and growth. It can be delivered. Everything I do with youth is somehow about communication and helping them communicate well in their lives, after they're long gone from me.

KELLY: Hopefully to be able to put the youth in positions of empowerment and leadership.

To what extent does your understanding of your institution as one of many nodes within a youth's broader learning ecology shape your institution's practices and role in the community?

KELLY: That we're an important resource, especially because we're free, for the youth to be able to access particularly when they are not in jail. I think my institution can be a very valuable resource to hopefully offering them a positive community and perhaps making better choices by being able to explore their interests and developing their skills so that they can be deterred from being at such places as the jail.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/jesseprechallengesanticipated.mp3>

Margo on the role of technology in preparing youth for life in the real world.

JESSE/MARY: As a public library we are a piece of the learning community puzzle. We serve all members of the community but often need to market ourselves more to the populations that need our services most.

MARGO: Two new networks have been established for youth and adults to garner bonds between outside agencies, MCSO staff and to prepare inmates for positive re-entry. GED and CMS students may reenter school and ultimately graduate. They can also graduate while here.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/margoprecollegeanalogy.mp3>

Margo on youth "going wild" when they enter college, as an analogy for the 17-year-olds turning 18 in jail, and how she hopes this program will give them focus

3. WORKED EXAMPLE A: SYNCHRONOUS VS. ASYNCHRONOUS COLLABORATION – VIRTUAL WORLDS AND VOICETHREADS

The original plan for uCreate was to bring the youth together in a common third space, a virtual world, to leverage their unique abilities to offer embodied experiences and bring people together from remote locations. We envisioned giving the youth the skills they needed to build in collaboration their own virtual world, populate it with thematically related digital media they would produce in the program, then, once

they left, open it up to the public to experience, their offering to the world. We soon encountered two obstacles, each, with its own resolution, shaping the rest of the project

First was the question of whether the youth from the two sites should be allowed to be in the world at the same time. Concern was raised about live interaction amongst the youth. Within such an open environment, might the conversations go every which way, leaving the facilitators unable to moderate it quickly enough? And how could the schedules be coordinated, especially given the time zone difference of one hour? Given time, this might have all been resolved – for example, the conversation topics might need additional structure – but we just agreed to have the youth represent themselves through their creations, to be left for the other group to visit on their own.

As a result, moving forward, the collaboration and communication between the jails would be limited to asynchronous means, as you will see. At first, this seemed to be a poor use of the affordances of virtual worlds. However, that concern was rendered moot with the second obstacle: the virtual world unexpectedly announced, the week before Christmas and three weeks before the launch of uCreate, that they were closed for business.

That was one edge we couldn't cross. As a result, the outline of the program was restructured to use a range of social media tools, whose companies we further gambled would last until the end of the project, and link them together to create one larger project. In the end, this was in good alignment with our switch to asynchronous collaboration, as many of the tools that would be used afforded such opportunities, such as the first project, Learning Ecology Maps shared through VoiceThread.

Learning Ecology Maps are a practice developed by Global Kids through work with their own youth. It emerges from the recognition that digital media is challenging what learning looks like, when it happens, where and with whom. Take Tashawna for example. Tashawna is a high school senior in Brooklyn, NY. In the morning she leaves home for school listening to her MP3s, texting her friends about meeting up afterschool at Global Kids, where she participates in a theater program, or FIERCE, the community center for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender youth. On the weekend she'll go to church and, on any given day, visit MySpace and Facebook as often as she can. While she misses television and movies, she says she just can't find the time.

This describes what we can call Tashawna's distributed learning network, the most important places in her life where learning occurs. Not just at home, school and church but also through digital media, like MP3s, SMS and social networks, and at youth-serving institutions, like Global Kids and FIERCE. Some are places that require her presence, like school, while others are self-directed, like MySpace. But the learning she gathers across the nodes in her network are preparing her to succeed in ways no one node could do on its own.

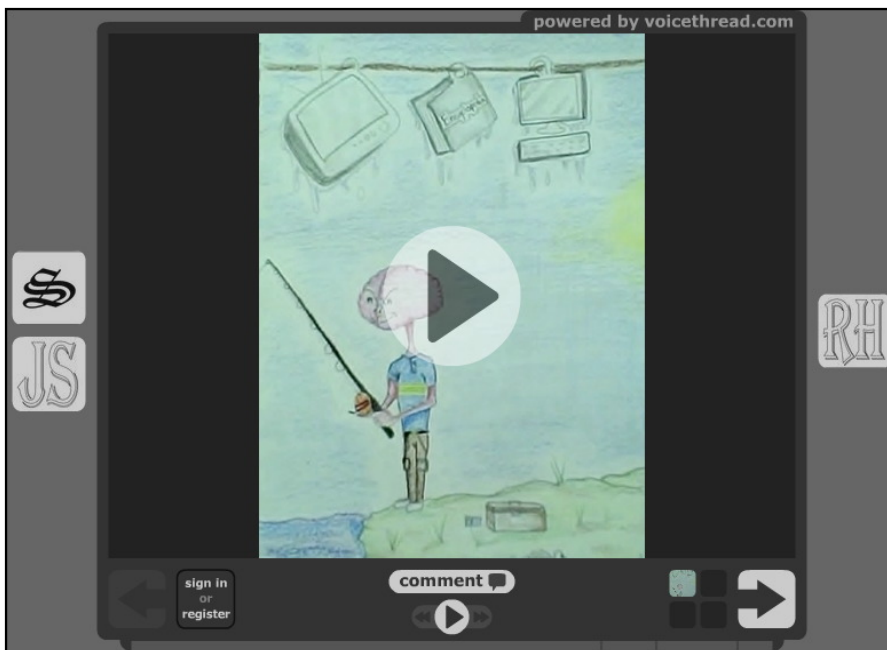
And Tashawna is not alone. In part due to the changes in education, in part due to the affects of digital media, youth have a wide array of options for learning knowledge and developing skills. But how many youth feel in charge of their networks, or are even aware they exist as an interconnected whole? How do they learn to synthesize what they learn and communicate it to future employers and college admission staff who won't learn of their strengths on most school transcripts?

The Learning Ecology Maps are a step in the direction of supporting youth to visualize their distributed learning network, develop language to talk about it, and increase their ability to intentionally structure and navigate their way around it. To create the maps, youth are asked to list all of the places in their lives where they learn. It is left to the youth to determine how to define “places” and “learn.” After an iterative process in which youth share drafts of their list and eventual maps, a final map is produced, such as Tashawna's below:



Once the map is created, that is just the beginning. Youth are then asked to discuss and annotate their maps, to provide a tour, as it were. As the youth could not communicate synchronously between the jails, an asynchronous solution was found with VoiceThread. VoiceThread is a free, easy to use, online social media tool that affords the ability to link together digital media assets in an online presentation and offer guided text or voice narration. Finally, these maps were designed to be used as the foundation for the program so that at the end of the six weeks they could discuss how they incorporated what, how, and where they learned about digital media into their maps. The maps were also used as reflection tools throughout the six weeks when they focused on their critical choices throughout their lives.

Here is one example:

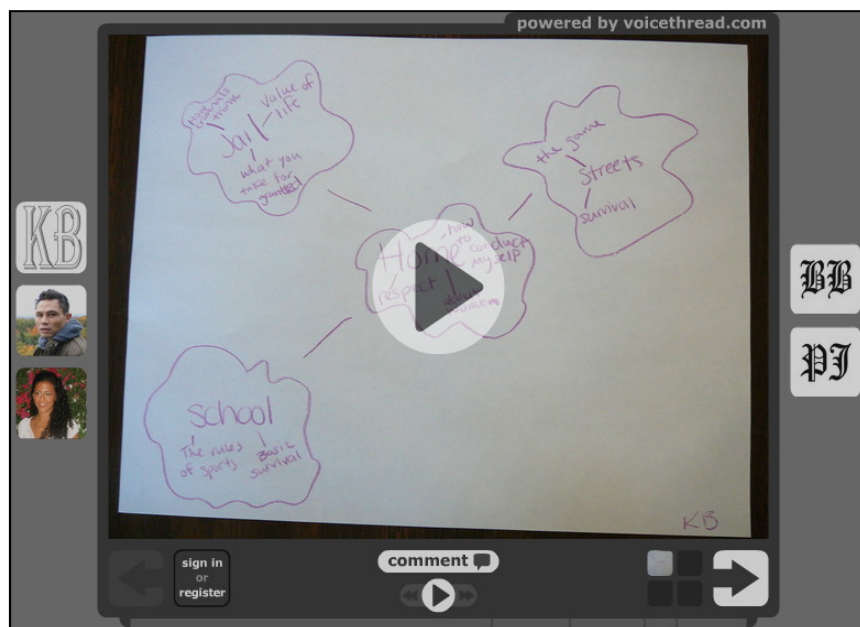


Click to view: <http://voicethread.com/book.swf?b=870591>

Amongst other things, it is worth noting how through the very act of presenting his map, through teaching another how to view it, he has a moment of realization (about his multitasking books with television) which is then encoded into the presentation itself: “well I did [not] make that realization until now, that’s another good reason I’m explaining this to you.” He is aware that he is “explaining it,” in part, so that he can make “realizations.”

The use of Voicethreads to share their maps forced us to address three different edge points.

3A. EDGE POINT I: BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION



Click to view: <http://voicethread.com/book.swf?b=874875>

As you may have noticed, viewers of a VoiceThread are offered multiple ways to annotate each segment of the presentation with text and even voice, allowing the youth the opportunity to comment and question each other’s presentation, to turn an activity focused on self-expression into an opportunity to collaborate. In the example from KB above, youth from the two cities were able to leave constructive text and audio comments for one another on the sites. Note in the following example how, after the two facilitators from Global Kids respond, the first youth (“BB” in Charlotte) offers a comment (“I like your map”) while the second (“PJ” in Charlotte) empathizes with KB (in Madison) and then asks a probing question (“Your map is very interesting because everything you learn from I have been through, but how has what you learned effected your life?”)

Throughout the project we found that monitoring the guys while they were leaving comments was helpful, otherwise they typically seemed to say something inappropriate (i.e. ‘trash talking’) or would leave a one line phrase such as ‘that’s cool, man’. It wasn’t that these comments were necessarily inappropriate because we were in a jail, it was more that we were trying to further develop how they could look at the media and respond to it. We would not only monitor, but also give them prompts such as: What do you like about it? What do you have a question about? They often verbally articulated within the classroom their first reaction to the project in greater detail than they would in an audio or text comment. As the comments became more of a dialogue, the youth learned how to make more appropriate comments

Being able to comment through digital media forced uCreate to work on the edge as the ability to collaborate within a jail environment is severely curtailed, even more so with the outside world or into another jail. For example, talking in the hallways is not allowed in order to minimize any fights that might break out if someone says something that might upset another [1]. If the guys are in a classroom such as the library, they are not allowed to look out the windows into the hallway where others might be passing by. They need special permission to work on a project together outside of the classroom. This is often difficult. Permission might be granted at one level of authority yet, due to a lapse of communication, never get approved at the next level.

Comments on each other's projects were not only provided by the youth but by the facilitators as well. Global Kids staff, for example, viewed the VoiceThread entries and responded via text or audio. The staff chose to use real photos of themselves for their representation, unlike the youth who used the letters of their initials or screen name initials. This real life element actually made some of the youth comment that they wanted to carry on a conversation directly with the Global Kids staff, to get to know them better. While this was a natural response in a social interaction, the jail could not permit incarcerated youth to enjoy unmoderated, open-ended conversations with people physically outside the system, even designated educators. As such, VoiceThread's limited comment capabilities forced the youth's conversation with Global Kids staff to be confined to details about their projects while excluding a lot of open-ended, personal dialogue.

At the end of the day, the educational forces pushing collaboration successfully used VoiceThread as a communications device that could function within the required strictures of the jail and its need for isolation.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkexamples/audio-files/jesseprerelbtwnteachers%26inmates.mp3>

Jesse's hope that the relationship between the youth and teachers can grow in the future as a result of the project.

[1] Tools of communication are similarly restricted. In fact, our using the marker on a whiteboard caused quite an incident at one point when the jail realized, after one of the programs, it wasn't in their inventory of supplies. Any materials-markers, pencils, crayons, etc. can all be used as weapons and must be inventoried before the guys leave the room. This can cause the guards to have to perform bodily inspections or check each room to locate the marker. It turns out the marker was left in the room and the next instructor picked it up. It created a stressful situation for all by forgetting to do a seemingly small task. While we were still able to continue to use the materials requested for uCreate, we were more vigilant in keeping track of what was used and returned each session.

3B. EDGE POINT 2: INFORMAL LEARNING VS. FORMAL LEARNING.

uCreate was unusual for most if not all of the youth in the program in how it situated digital media production within an educational setting. When it comes to digital media, they usually experienced it, before their incarceration, as largely youth- and interest-driven. They used it because they wanted to use it, not because someone told them they had to.

uCreate was a far cry from their educational experiences as well, both inside and outside the jail. In a GED class offered within the institution, youth learn to "game the system," doing the work to meet not their own expectations but those of the teacher and program. They will ask questions like, "how many pages do you want me to write," and "tell me what I need to know to pass the test."

As a result, uCreate forced its participants, on one hand, to sacrifice the freedom they were used to with digital media while, on the other hand, affording them opportunities for personal expression rarely experienced within traditional educational programs. So while we had to restrict youth access to the full potential of digital media for education, we also had to empower them to use the resources we were

making available. Throughout the design and implementation process, we tried to be very aware of how we would present the information to the participants so that their project wasn't the result of what they thought we wanted to hear. Since the use of digital media was in a pretty controlled environment, and thus, somewhat artificial in terms of how they might use it at home or a public library space, they might naturally have felt that we were looking for a certain product or response. We wanted to steer clear of them feeling like they had to give us a "right" answer, as well as 'us' being perceived as the teacher and them as the student. Rather, we tried to foster a more natural response in using the technology as if they were in an unregulated environment.

We did this by giving them broad instructions for their activity and support them to apply the lessons in the best ways they saw fit. We showed them a previously created learning map, for example, but then encouraged them to complete their own. If they expressed interest in responding in an unanticipated manner, such as through the video response to GK, we could support them to do so. We also tried to create an atmosphere where they didn't feel like they were being negatively judged or graded and offered opportunity to display their developing skills and knowledge. The participants at Jail North, for example, were encouraged to informally present their work to one another, provide feedback while gaining confidence in their ability to express their ideas within the group.

3C. EDGE POINT 3: USER NAMES

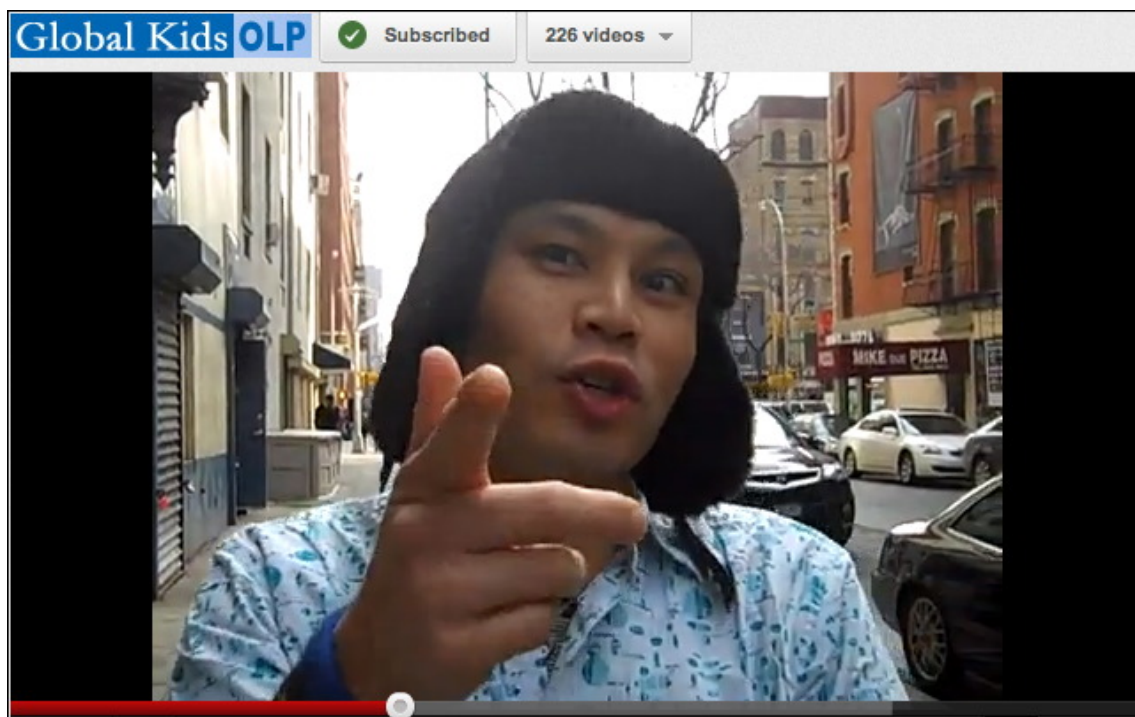
Finally, the youth were encouraged, but not required, to create a public username that differed from their own when expressing themselves throughout the program through various public digital media tools. When using a thumbnail graphic to represent themselves online, particularly when leaving comments on VoiceThread, the guys chose to use their initials, either their real initials or the initials of their chosen username:



Not choosing one's real first and last name is not unique to the jail setting; it would be encouraged in a program given at the public library as well. One of the differences though is the impact it could create if there is information from their stories that talk about why they are in jail. We felt it was important to protect them from this by having them choose a username that is not their own. The pseudo-anonymity provided by these online social media tools allowed each youth to be identified with, and take pride in, their public expressions, yet provide distance from the work should its content prove damaging were it linked back to them in unintended ways in the future.

4. EXAMPLE B: EYES WITHOUT A FACE – VIDEOS

In order to communicate with the youth in uCreate, we planned for scheduled Skype video sessions, which would allow jail library staff and Global Kids staff to coordinate and allow the Global Kids staff to interact in real time with the incarcerated youth. Since the technology didn't work at Jail North (it seemed to have been blocked), Global Kids created a video to introduce themselves, the organization, and the role they had in the program.



Click to view: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJlufriRTsQ>

In response to viewing the video, Jesse, the librarian from the Madison Public Library who worked with the youth at the Dane County Jail, posted in the private section of uCreate web site the following:

“The MAD crew appreciated your video introduction so much they asked if they could record a response. After discussing how this could be done with the teacher, we had KB (the 16 year-old who cannot be filmed) record it and the other two talked. I just sent you the video and will not post here as the teacher-expressed great concern that it not be posted online or shown outside of the uCreate program. I'm sure they'd dig any other chances you guys have to interact, whether it is another video or perhaps a live stream. It's nice that they now have a feel for who is responding to their posts too.”
<http://projectedge.ning.com>, 2/3/10).

To create this video, however, entailed working on the edge.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/jesseposttalkaboutvideos.mp3>

Jesse on the value of the videos the youth watched on YouTube as a platform for starting conversations

4A. EDGE POINT: SELF-EXPRESSION VS. FORCED ANONYMITY

Note that Jesse described the youth known as KB as “the 16 year-old who cannot be filmed.” These were not public videos to be shared on a site like YouTube. They were strictly designed for site-to-site communication. Yet the correctional center would not give permission for an underage youth to show his face in a video. If it was live, and presumably unrecorded, Skype video would have been fine but recorded video was deemed pushing the envelope too far.

This was not our expectation at the outset. At Jail North, for example, we drafted a form for the youth to give their permission to be on camera if they wanted to record such things as their learning map or timeline while having their face visible. This form was preliminarily approved by the librarian at Jail North, but later

denied by the sheriff, even for those 18 and older, as this was such uncharted territory. In the end, it was okay to bring in the Flip camera and film audio and video of the guys, just not their faces, even if they gave permission to do so. Recording their voice without showing their faces seemed like a workable solution. In fact, it encouraged the youth to not just be behind the camera but literally holding it, filming their program.

But whether it was the overage youth showing their faces or the underage youth revealing only their voice and viewpoint, we can't show you their video. In other words, the video for this segment of the worked example exists. It is the video produced by the youth. It was viewed by the intended audience. You, the reader of this Worked Example, unfortunately, cannot view it, as you were not part of that audience. And perhaps that's the point. It need not be publicly shared to have educational impact for the youth who produced it, as long as it was shared site to site. This worked example can best make this point by not showing you the artifact, by, in fact, highlighting its absence.

5. EXAMPLE 6 C: PROTECTING PRIVACY – COMICS

Bitstrips is a dynamic online comic creator, where expression, background, and movement can be translated online and shared through its own social network. We thought it would be a perfect tool, towards the end of the six weeks, to explore comics and graphic novels as a form of storytelling. To develop some comic literacy we brought in examples from the public library, talked about the range of content graphic novels covered, and explored the variety of artistic expression.

From Kelly's blog post: "We took turns reading aloud the graphic novel *Pitch Black* by Youme Landowne (*Cinco Puntos Press*, 2008). They seemed to enjoy it. It was a good way for me to tell what they knew/might not know about comics/gn's. One guy said he thought it was supposed to be funny. Another had a bit of a hard time following how to read it.

One guy had trouble reading period, and the other guys helped him with words that he stumbled over but they all did read aloud." (2/16/10, <http://projectedge.ning.com>)

On one hand, Bitstrips worked well given the restrictions of the educational setting: drawn comics, by conventions of the genre, forced the youth to abstract what they portrayed, avoiding the more realistic, and thus challenging, representations found in tools like the videos. So the edge points here were not concerned with restrictions from the jail administration but, rather, from the social context of being an incarcerated youth and where it ran up against the power of youth media for public self-expression.

From Kelly's blog post: "I think they liked the flexibility that bitstrips offered. Most were comfortable to just jump right in and create their own scenes, etc. I did ask them to stick with the theme of uCreate so that their comic was about characters making choices. One guy didn't get it at first as he had characters talking to each other in an inappropriate way about one guy's mom. He quickly got back on track-still struggling a little with dialogue-but it was improved. One guy created a panel where he wanted the character's dialogue that was on the far right of the scene to be read before the character who was on the left. I showed him how to make that possible by shifting his speech bubbles and making the font more noticeable. I think this was important, as he understood then how it was being read. They got to be not only creators but audience as well and look reflectively on what they created." (2/16/10, <http://projectedge.ning.com>)

5A. EDGE POINT: PROTECTING YOUTH VS. SUPPORTING YOUTH DECISIONS

Social media like Bitstrips are often used by people to explore their identities. Because the youth in the program were incarcerated, there were limitations on how far these typical aspects of digital media could be publicly explored. Because the young adults are incarcerated, however, sometimes it seems that being in jail is the only thing they want to talk about. It is ever present and causes them to define who they are.

We always encouraged the youth not to use the reason why they were in jail as a subject matter or, if they did, to be vague about it. This was partly to protect them, as they were pre-trial, and if they revealed anything about their case, especially on the social space of the Internet, it possibly could be used against them in a court of law. Confidentiality about their charges was important. Another reason was to help them see themselves as part of a different future, one which had nothing to do with being in jail but, rather, being a productive member of society.

However, it wasn't always cut and dry regarding what they could and couldn't say, or should and shouldn't say, in regards to their lives as incarcerated youth. There wasn't much precedent to reference in regards to using digital media in this manner within these two jails, much less any jail facilities. To complicate it further, some of the youth were 18 and over, rather than minors, who theoretically could give their permission to say or do what they wanted within reasonable boundaries, even if that meant referring to why they were in jail.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/jessepostcomfortzone.mp3>

Jesse on where using social networks pushed up against the jail's comfort zone and its implications for teachers.

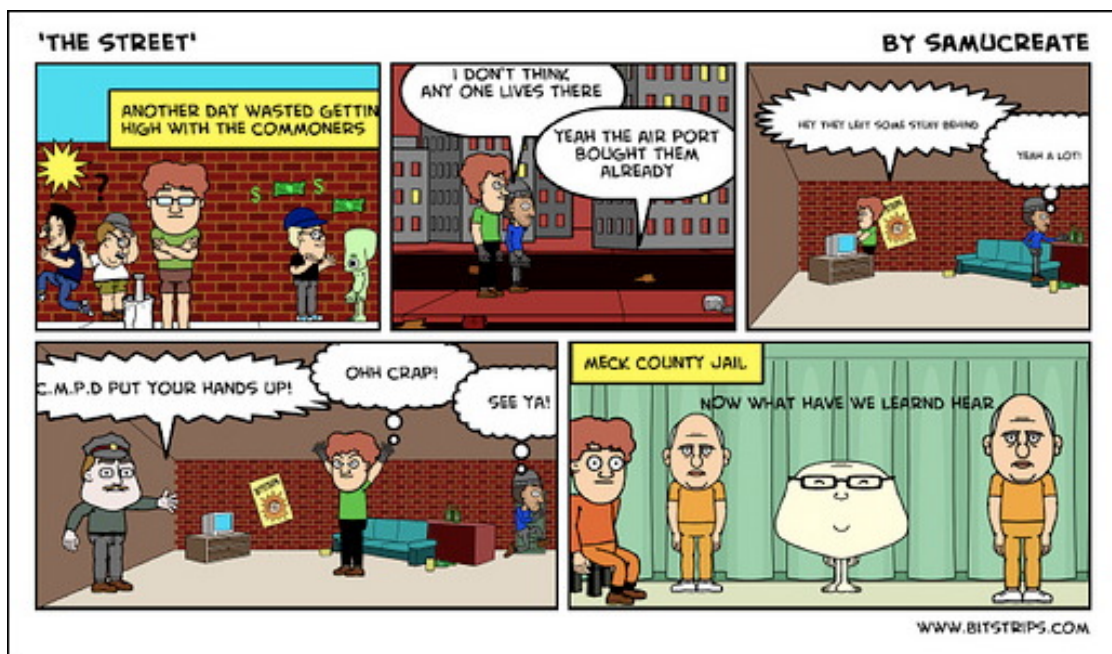
Throughout the project, we tried to remain cognizant of what the youth revealed about themselves without compromising either their identity or security. As we did not want to squash their ability to use digital media to represent themselves, this was often a fine line to tread. Laying down ground rules such as “choose a screen name that is not your real name” was something fairly easy to do and abide by. Most all of the participants knew what a screen name was and had already had one they used on sites such as YouTube or MySpace before they were incarcerated. Other times, the guys self-regulated themselves. During the session where they used GarageBand to come up with lyrics related to a critical choice, they found it difficult not to swear. Even though this wasn't mentioned as a ground rule before they began free-styling, they immediately came to the conclusion we desired, that it wasn't appropriate to incorporate swear words. Provided with the right opportunity and context it seems they could, at times, figure out an appropriate level of self-restraint and self-censorship.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/jessepostcursingraps.mp3>

Mary and Jesse describe inappropriate content and how this was dealt with by the youth and the facilitators.

But in the example below from Jail North, the over-18 participant decided to illustrate the reason why he was in jail. We found ourselves on the fine line of not wanting to squelch his creativity yet wanting to protect him from potential future ramifications. It did not show any violent crime and seemed to illustrate learning from his mistakes. We decided to ask if he was certain he wanted to do this. He said he was. At that point, as an adult, we decided we had to respect his decision.



6. WHAT WE LEARNED

Previous to uCreate, Kelly Czarnecki, the librarian from the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, had worked with the incarcerated youth at Jail North, during which the youth accessed Teen Second Life, created a MySpace page, and wrote blog posts. Yet before starting uCreate, she had concerns that accessing the Internet might be a problem, as it had been some time since the youth had accessed a computer. Could they reign in their pent up passions, staying focused and on task? Would the actual work of the program be able to compete with the flash of the digital media? In fact, this proved not to be a challenge at all and, instead, protecting their privacy became a key issue to be addressed quite frequently.

She had to deal with many of the questions explored above, such as if their screen name could include their real name, or if they could create a comic depicting why they were incarcerated. She and her colleagues were forced to ask, time and again, where should the line be drawn between personal expression & collaboration and personal safety. Upon reflection, Kelly said if she ran a similar program in the future, she would like to anticipate issues of privacy coming up more often in regards to communicating over such a public forum. She doesn't believe everything has to be decided in advance - there should be ample opportunity for discussions with the youth about their consequences of putting certain information online - but perhaps some could be more cut and dried regarding what is okay to share online and what is best to keep within the classroom.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkexdexamples/audio-files/marypostliteracyissues.mp3>
Kelly explains how basic literacy was more of an issue than she expected in the program.

The skills the youth developed throughout this six week collaboration not only exposed them to skills needed for the 21st century workforce but gave them the opportunity to play with media they might be interested in pursuing as a hobby, such as creating music or reading comics. The librarians hoped that, for both those who return to the public and those who remain in the system, the youth would increasingly view the public library as a positive place for them to pursue a broader range of skills and opportunities through digital media than they might previously have imagined.

In the beginning we posed the following question: How can a participatory culture be created within an institution where self-expression is discouraged, where the idea of collaborating with adults and fellow incarcerated youth in other jails challenges key assumptions and structural components of the institution's culture and practices? We hope these Worked Examples offered a variety of practical answers, perhaps of use to others, and clearly demonstrated the negotiation of edge points, which was required as essential steps towards building the participatory culture experienced by the incarcerated youth with the uCreate program. We would be pleased if these Examples offered hope to others who similarly struggle to use digital media, regardless of content, to create their own participatory learning cultures. Finally, to reiterate the goals of worked examples, as defined by James Paul Gee, they should "publicly display... methods of valuing and thinking about a specific problem, proposing them as examples of 'good work' in order to engender debate..." Now that you have read these Worked Examples, please post your feedback and join us in shaping the emerging fields of learning through digital media.

Let the debate begin.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/jessepostadvice.mp3>

Jesse gives advice to others: "...just jump in and do it...I am much better at my job after doing something like that."



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/marypostjail%26sheriffweregreat.mp3>

Mary on how great the Dane County Jail and the sheriff was to work with.



<https://sites.google.com/site/edgeprojectworkedexamples/audio-files/jessepostusbsticks.mp3>

On youth getting memory sticks of their finished work at the end of the program.

How Using Social Media Forced a Library to Work on the Edge in Their Efforts to Move Youth From “Hanging Out” to “Messing Around”

An Edge Project Worked Example, the second in a series.

Written by Christopher Shoemaker, H. Jack Martin and Barry Joseph

I. UNDERSTANDING YOUTH'S LEARNING THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA

In 2009, Mimi Ito released *Hanging Out, Messing Around and Geeking Out: Living and Learning with New Media*, a book composed of 23 related studies. These ethnographic studies interrogated how learning is being experienced by teens via informal uses of digital media. The title refers to the framework around how youth learn through digital media and networked spaces, a kind of learning that is quite often invisible to adults who often confuse it with playing, wasting time or, at worst, as undermining youth's ethical values and social competencies. This collection of studies, however, finds that these three different modes of participation with digital media, in fact, support the development of a wide range of new media literacies.

According to this framework, learning begins when teens go online, on their computers or their mobile phones, using social networking tools and engaging with games and other electronic content. “Hanging Out, according to Ito's paradigm, is the first level of engagement where teens are reading each other's profile information and connecting with their friends. Using these platforms and social media tools, adolescent learners build their own self-directed learning communities with their own unique patterns of behavior and communication pathways. It's within these communities that the synaptic connections between the youth and their learning first form. (Mizuko Ito et al., *Hanging Out, Messing Around and Geeking Out: Living and Learning with New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009, 17)

Once teens connect with friends and family using social media tools and join interest-driven communities, they become exposed to the mutual interests of their learning circles and move towards a different mode of participation: “Messing Around.” Often these ideas are new and open the doors to unique exploration possibilities where youth venture out on their own to learn more about a particular topic or area of interest. This may involve doing a Google search for an area of interest or hanging out in chat rooms geared towards a particular topic. Often a youth learner's own interests are reinforced by their friends or learning circle. (Mizuko Ito et al., 17)

Ito calls the third mode of participation “Geeking Out,” which occurs when a youth learner jumps headfirst into a focused topic, theme or area of interest. A youth may become part of a specialized knowledge group that explores specific issues or topics “with the goal of improving their own knowledge and expertise or to educate or to inspire others.” (Mizuko Ito et al., 17) These youth often develop expertise around these topics appreciated by others within that community.

This study was one of the first released as part of the MacArthur Foundation's Digital Media and Learning Initiative. As described within their most recent promotional material, the foundation identifies at least three key shifts that must occur if the U.S. educational system is going to move into the 21st century:

- **A shift from education to learning.** "Education is what institutions do, learning is what people do. Digital media enable learning anywhere, anytime."
- **A shift from consumption of information to participatory learning.** "A new system of learning must be peer-based and organized around learners' interests, enabling them to create as well as consume information."
- **A shift from institutions to networks.** "In the digital age...people learn across institutions, so an entire learning network must be supported."

This shift, in part, is towards a different model of learning, one that is life-long and learner directed. And Ito's framework exists within these broad shifts. Yet it is not designed to describe a preferred path through the modes of participation -- it might be equally useful for one to move from messing around to either hanging or geeking out -- but rather to provide a context for the rather challenging notion, especially for adults, that "kids gain most of their knowledge and competencies in contexts that do not involve formal instruction." (*Mizuko Ito et al., 21*) This may prove troubling for a classroom teacher, but welcoming for library staff that offer programs directed towards the "hanging out" model that may include drop in programs where groups of youth can play Guitar Hero. Also, for those looking to increase access to digital media, additional support is offered: "The most engaged and active forms of learning with digital media happen in youth-driven settings that are focused on social communication and recreation." (*Mizuko Ito et al., 12*)

But how can programs at the "hanging out" level be re-imagined or transformed to offer youth a different mode of participation? How does an informal learning institution such as a library, whose primary delivery for programming resides at the "hanging out" level, develop new programs, support educators, and offer the required technology infrastructure to allow youth to engage in a different mode of participation, namely "messing around"? Ito seems hopeful that this is possible, even desired, at least for less privileged youth. "For youth who do not have easy access to digital-production tools and the online networks of interest-driven groups, local youth media programs play an important role as a place to connect with like-minded peers." (*Mizuko Ito et al., 349*) And within such programs, adults play a key role. They assist youth to negotiate the creation of new social norms online. They serve as mentors and "co-conspirators." They help to establish standards for what counts as expertise. Mirroring what seems to work so well online within mixed-age communities, within informal learning institutions "the challenge is to build roles for productive adult participation that respect youth expertise, autonomy, and initiative." (*Mizuko Ito et al., 340*)

Ito offers a direction for moving an informal learning institution's programs from one mode of participation to another, incorporating their use of digital media for learning. Also important is the expertise youth bring into the program. Ito recommends that adults give youth autonomy to direct their own activities, and open learning modules so youth can take the initiative.

This is the challenge offered by Ito and the one recently taken up by the New York Public Library. This worked example is not designed to report the successes or failure of this pilot project. Rather, it is intended to explore and take a critical look at the obstacles encountered along the way and

discusses how they were negotiated. Finally, it will leverage Ito's framework to provide context to understand what it means to use digital media for learning and how to apply these lessons learned, both for this organization and others.

2. DIGITAL EXPRESSIONS AT THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Digital Expressions was the second completed Edge Project. The program launched in the Spring of 2010 at the New York Public Library. Since the 1920's, The New York Public Library has been one of the pioneer libraries responding to and celebrating the needs of teenagers. The library also dedicates much of its physical space to adolescents which provides youth with a safe environment to learn after school and hands-on instructional programming by artists, designers, writers and more.

The New York Public Library has offered technology-focused programming for teens since the late 1990's, including web design, sound design, digital filmmaking and more. To build upon the success of these early programs, the library decided to expand its digital media and learning footprint. Global Kids' Digital Expressions curriculum, with its focus on "social media for social good," offered a great platform and partnership to test these new learning methods at the library.

The Global Kids' Digital Expressions program supports youth educators to work with young people to foster their acquisition of digital media production and analytic skills through youth engagement in participatory media or "Web 2.0" tools. Participants use web tools to engage in activities that map, remix, and blog original and online content to make their voice heard on important social issues while gaining critical social skills and cultural competencies that will be critical to their participation in civic life in the 21st century. The program was inspired by work produced through Henry Jenkin's New Media Literacies and is designed to not only develop youth's skills but also support their ability to understand and articulate what they have learned.

In development from February through June 2010, Digital Expressions took place within three neighborhood libraries in New York City: the Throg's Neck Branch Library in the Bronx, the Hamilton Grange Branch Library in Harlem and the Seward Park Branch Library in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. These three sites were selected because they all have large teen populations who frequent them. All three sites previously had successful and regularly scheduled technology programs before this, such as Teen Tech Time and Game On @ The Library. Library staff, already familiar with both youth developmental needs and social media were trained by Global Kids staff. With the curriculum in hand and online support services from Global Kids, they selected and led the Digital Expressions workshops for the teens over the following ten weeks. Hamilton Grange Branch Library had four teens regularly attend the program, while Throg's Neck had fourteen and Seward Park had ten.

The workshops focused on youth expressing themselves and addressing public issues through library staff-led social media projects. Youth researched social issues online at the library and then created media that reflected their thoughts and opinions around that issue. Participants were awarded badges that represented each specific learning goal or method they mastered. At the conclusion of the project they were asked to design a digital portfolio on VoiceThread, which they were to showcase at a NYC-wide event called Emoti-con.

The program was developed to test the assertion that using social media could afford NYPL the

opportunity to engage young people in practices that would inspire them to mess around, as opposed to just hanging out. However, the Library was required to negotiate edge points at several steps along the way.

The following three examples highlight one form of youth media produced in the program, will define and consider the edge points came into conflict, and explore how those points were negotiated. These edge points tended to form around two sets of forces, the specifics of which will be detailed within the examples.

The conditions that were supporting youth creating digital media included the underlying philosophy that libraries, as public and informal learning institutions, need to be able to support youth's learning both on and offline, and could do so on a deeper level when the following conditions were met: library staff exhibited willingness to participate, teens were interested in exploring digital media and social issues, and the institutional culture was able to collaborate with Global Kids and integrate its youth media practices through the implementation of this project.

The conditions that limited the achievement of the project primarily revolved around the Library's technology infrastructure. Despite the Library's ongoing commitment to provide technological support and equipment to all of its 87 libraries for public use, the newness of a project like this still imposed some limitations, challenging its bandwidth levels, firewalls and site compatibility. Also, the standardization of the hardware available made it difficult for many participants to realize many of the project's goals. Also, a cultural norm within the library views after school education as targeted towards self-selecting, drop-in audiences, making it difficult for staff to recruit youth to participate in a more structured program.

These conditions clearly are not unique to The New York Public Library. Libraries across the country--especially those with challenged funding--no doubt experience many of these same issues. The following examples will illustrate the edge points encountered in this project and how the library staff and teens were able to address, work through or circumnavigate around them.

3. WORKED EXAMPLE A: WHEN PROGRAMMING WITH DIGITAL MEDIA CHALLENGES PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

The structure of the Digital Expressions project represents a new model for teen programming at the Library. Traditionally after-school teen programs at NYPL have been primarily for self-selecting drop-in youth. Programs are designed for a minimum of a single session or a maximum of six sessions if the project is realized as a series.

However, even those designed as a series have been significantly less formal, allowing drop-in attendance for any of the sessions. This culture of learning engagement is based on nationally recognized youth development principles. The Library recognizes that middle and high school youth have many priorities after school, including the library, study groups, extracurricular activities, sports and more. The Library's open door attendance policy for programs welcomes all youth who are interested, regardless of whether or not they have attended previous sessions.

Up until recently, this was the norm for all program attendance at the Library. However, in recent years funding needs have required the Library to record and report on the outcomes of its

programmatic offerings. This shift in models has affected both the content and attendance requirements of much of what the Library offers. This shift has also permeated the older, open-door policy attendance practice that has been the cultural norm for programming at NYPL. Library staff in local branches have noticed this shift and have at times expressed doubt that youth would even be interested in attending multiple session workshops. In other words, they were afraid that youth would be unwilling to commit the time and intellectual and social demands required by projects like Digital Expressions.

3A. EDGE POINT I: DIGITAL MEDIA REQUIRES COMMITMENT

This presumption was first challenged in Spring 2009 when NYPL developed its first partnership with Global Kids. The project, entitled Playing For Keeps (P4K), taught youth about global issues, game design, and how to combine the two into what is often referred to as a “serious game.” It was the first project that forced NYPL to work on the edge and collaborate on a substantive digital media project.

The program required youth participants to commit to twenty workshops, which were held twice a week over a period of ten weeks. Despite initial uncertainties expressed by NYPL staff about retaining youth participants for the programs, the pilot project did succeed. Library staff was surprised to discover that teens were willing to commit to all of the sessions and engage with serious content. P4K encouraged teens to discuss world issues, research them using Library and Internet resources, and then apply that knowledge to construct a design for a serious game inspired by that content. In other words, students were able to hang out and discuss the issues together. They were also able to mess around online and explore different serious games and gaming tools, and similar to the Digital Expressions programs, construct an analog conceptualization of a serious game to showcase at Emoti-con 2009. Also, a number of youth took the opportunity to geek out, digging deep down into one area of media production creating an extensive art library for their game design. P4K set the precedent for building capacity towards a new, long-term lifelong learning model for after-school programming at NYPL.

The new project, Digital Expressions, was met with similar doubts as to the depth of content and length of time required as a new set of NYPL staff were trained to run the programs. At first these concerns seemed founded.

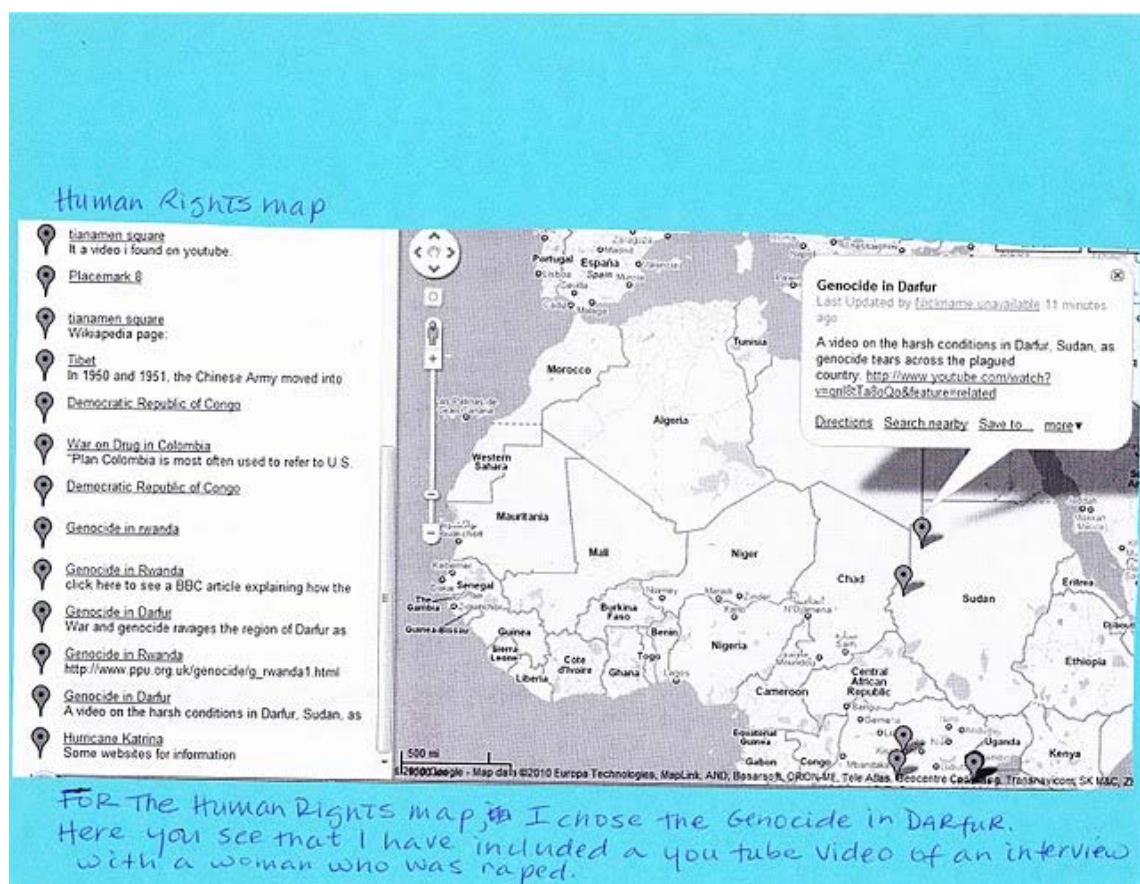
For example, in spite of an extensive and visibly successful outreach campaign, the dynamic and engaged Seward Park staff could not attract youth to the program even after expending considerable effort. They had tried to create a new programming schedule for the series, which posed a conflict in the youth’s after-school schedule. When, however, they decided to overlay Digital Expressions on top of their Teen Advisory Group, an already successful preexisting program designed on the previous model, the youth participants welcomed the deeper level of commitment. The branch was successful in retaining its ten students for every workshop, as were the other two branches.

3B. EDGE POINT 2: DIGITAL MEDIA SUPPORTED DEPTH

Increasing the depth of engagement from “hanging out” to “messaging around” proved an edge point for the Library. They also experienced another edge that also required negotiation: the depth of content.

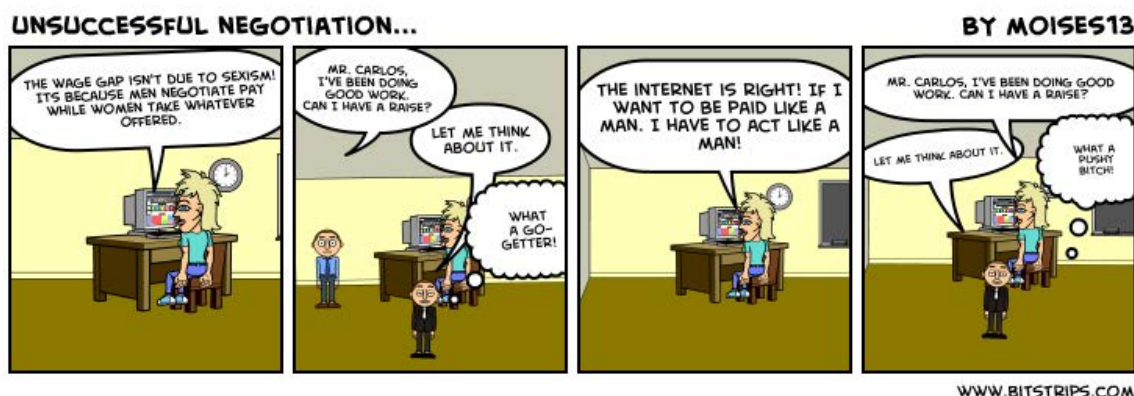
The participants were offered opportunities for self-expression through social media, the focus of which was largely directed toward social and global issues. For example, they went beyond simply collaborating on the creation of a Google Map; they created a Google Map documenting human rights abuses around the world.

At the start of the program, some staff expressed concern that youth would think the program content was too similar to the school experience, and would therefore not inviting. One staff member remarked that, for an informal learning program, the Digital Expressions curriculum felt too much like a global studies project. She was worried that the association with educational content would prevent youth from attending the programs. Ultimately, however, staff found that not only did youth attend the program but also they participated at a deep level of engagement at nearly all of the workshops. And their work showed it.



One youth's contribution to the group's Google Map on human rights abuses earned this participant her “transmedia navigation” page for her ability to talk about and display “the ability to follow the flow and stories and information across multiple modalities.”blown.”

It's important to note that NYPL has offered homework help, tutoring and other formal-learning based classes after school. What distinguishes their design from these two digital media-based programs was that they were marketed as addressing school-based needs and were never as time-intensive as Digital Expressions or Playing For Keeps. And, in fact, none were ever as popular as these two longer projects, which engaged the youth every time they came to the library. As one participant reported, during the Google mapping sessions on genocide, "You hear about this, but now that I'm thinking about it and working on it, my mind is blown"



This comic earned the participant his “negotiation” badge for his ability to talk about and recognize “the ability to travel across diverse communities and respect multiple perspectives.”

4. WORKED EXAMPLE B: WHEN TECHNOLOGY FAILS

A program cannot support youth to mess around with digital media without access to computers, the Internet, and the wide world of social media. The Digital Expressions program was designed to operate under minimal requirements. NYPL prepared for these requirements and anticipated that its technology infrastructure could meet these needs. Despite taking the measures, the project still presented them with many technological limitations.

The content and design of youth’s meeting rooms at NYPL vary greatly: fundamentals include a table, chairs, and bookshelves carved out of a preexisting area which may not have been designed with teens in mind. Others are created to appeal to teens’ aesthetic with special furniture, bookshelves, and desktop PCs reserved for teens only. At the highest level are the teens-only rooms, of which The New York Public Library has four. These are designed by and for teens with targeted collections, furnishings, desktop and laptop PCs, and other technologies support teens’ learning needs.

The last of these teens-only spaces was completed in 2006, well before Ito’s study began. Though they were designed during the birth of some of the most popular social media tools including MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter, the kinds of technological and philosophical infrastructure built into these spaces dates back five, ten, even fifteen years.

Some of the philosophical touchstones that went into the building of these spaces included:

- Providing youth with the library space equivalent to the real estate and resources that other age groups at NYPL receive;

- Providing youth with technological support, such as desktop PCs, for homework help and recreational use, as well as a website that could serve as a “home base” for all NYPL offerings;
- Providing youth with a place to gather, share ideas, discover themselves, and uncover the collections of the library.

Since the completion of the last NYPL teens-only space, library space considerations now include:

- Youth’s informal learning needs, especially those related to social media;
- The concept of online content creation, especially using social media tools;
- Social media’s connection between formal and informal learning;
- The impact social media has on learning methods.

The design of these spaces and the technology infrastructure support and constrain the kinds of programs the Library could host (primarily analog projects that focused on the arts, life skills, educational support, and literacy.) Yet, these spaces were not designed to support youth engaged in digital media creation. While NYPL was aware that their technology systems would impose some limitations on their program offerings, the Edge Project revealed larger, key areas that need to be re-examined. As a result, Digital Expressions was more easily able to provide opportunities for “hanging out” with digital media, yet when youth sought to change their mode of engagement, to deepen it to “messaging around,” they were limited by technological barriers.

A few examples were shared by a librarian at Throg’s Neck in the following examples:

The teens were happy to hang out at the Library and work with their friends. A few times, they started to go deeper and move onto the messing around and geeking out, but the computers wouldn't let them.

When they were designing the movie posters in one of the sessions, they were very excited and wanted to try doing more, but couldn't. The information technology restrictions on uploading and downloading items created too many barriers for success.

They were also very into the idea of the digital portfolios on VoiceThread. When they went to construct their own and play around with the tools and features, however, there were snags on microphones and adding images.

Because the standardization of its technology infrastructure won’t allow NYPL patrons to download or save content from the Web, the Digital Expressions participants were prevented from adding the digital content they had created online to VoiceThread. Yet, on this edge point between youth interests and the technological constraints of the system, successful negotiations, in the end, were realized.

4A. EDGE POINT I: RELYING ON THE KINDNESS OF LIBRARY STAFF

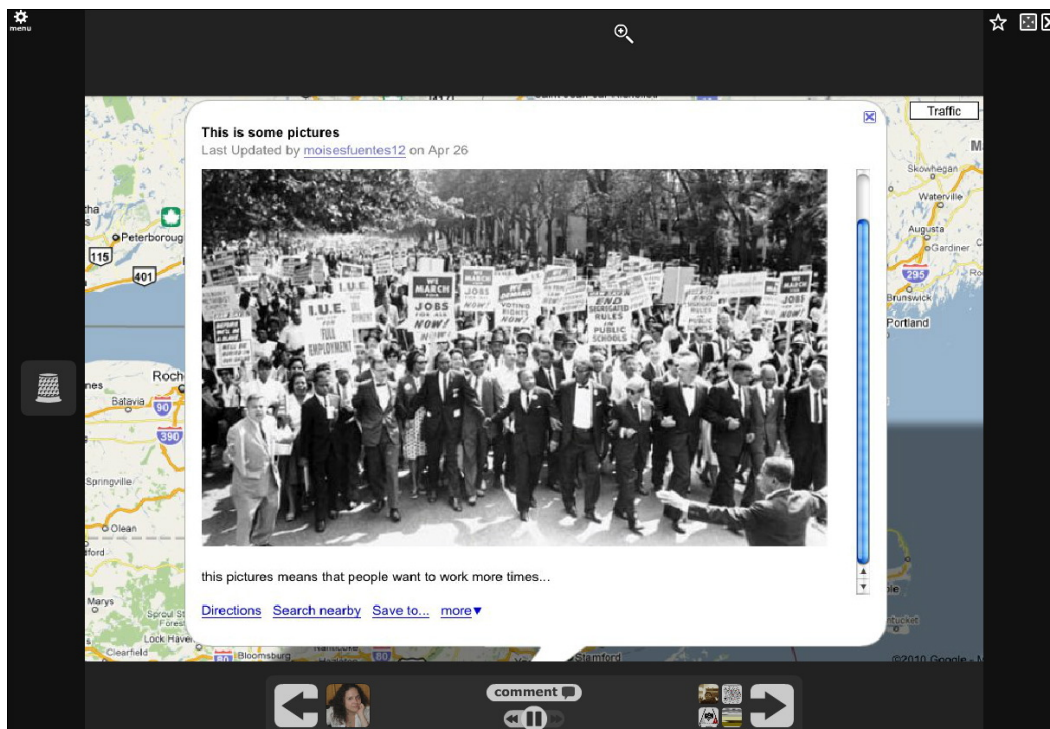
The culminating project for each participant in the program was the creation of a digital portfolio. Using VoiceThread, the youth were able to curate their own digital media projects and add voice narration describing both the projects and the associated badges earned. VoiceThread describes

itself as “a collaborative, multimedia slide show that holds images, documents, and videos and allows people to navigate slides and leave comments...” In addition, users can doodle while commenting, embed the VoiceThreads on other sites, and create them in a quick, easy-to-use web-based interface.

VoiceThread’s only technology requirements are bandwidth, the Internet, the ability to download and save content to the desktop.

While some youth completed the program with digital portfolios to share, none were created through the NYPL computer system. Instead, the youth used the personal laptops of the NYPL staff members, thus enabling the youth to circumvent NYPL’s information technology system.

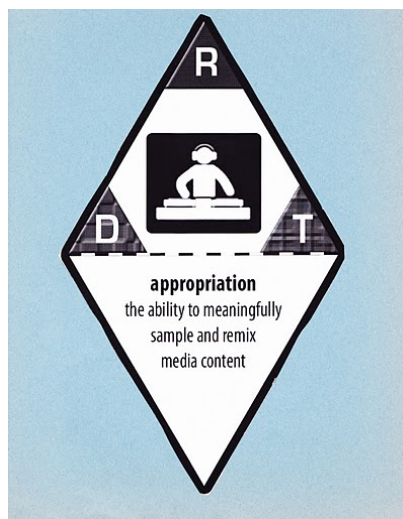
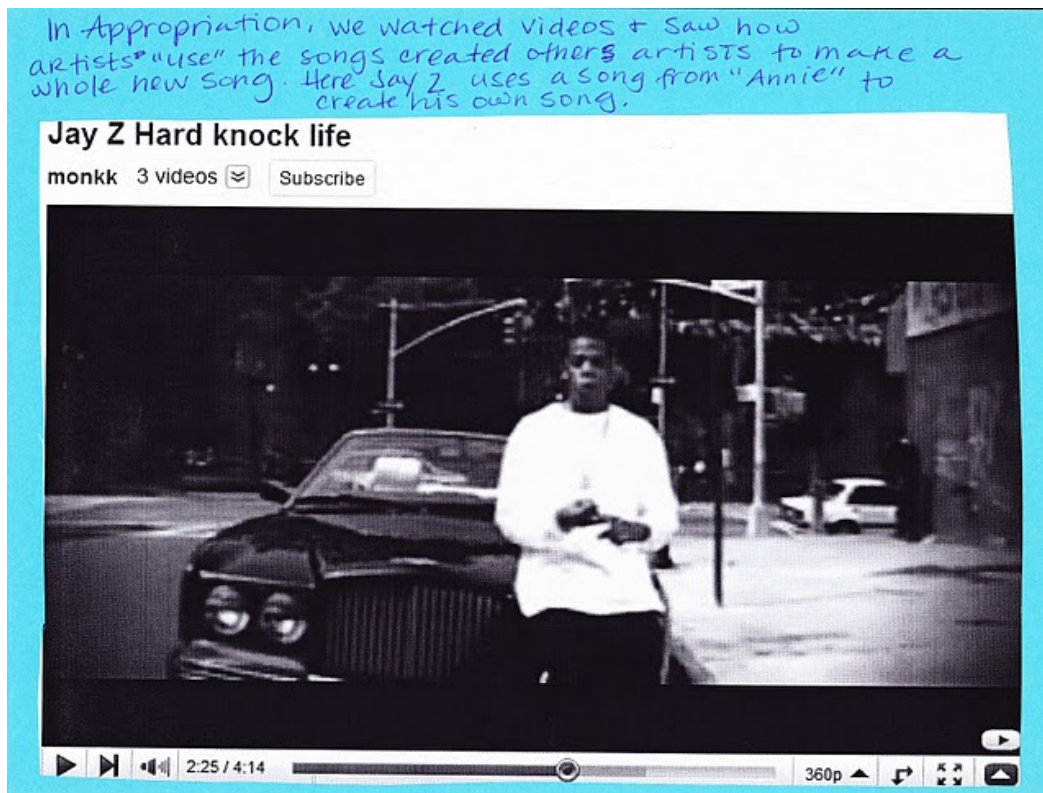
An organization cannot depend upon the kindness of its staff to achieve its programs, however. Nor can this limited solution assist all teens in negotiating this edge point. But in spite of these limitations, these youth were ultimately able to mess around with social media by producing digital portfolios.



Click to view: <http://voicethread.com/book.swf?b=874875>

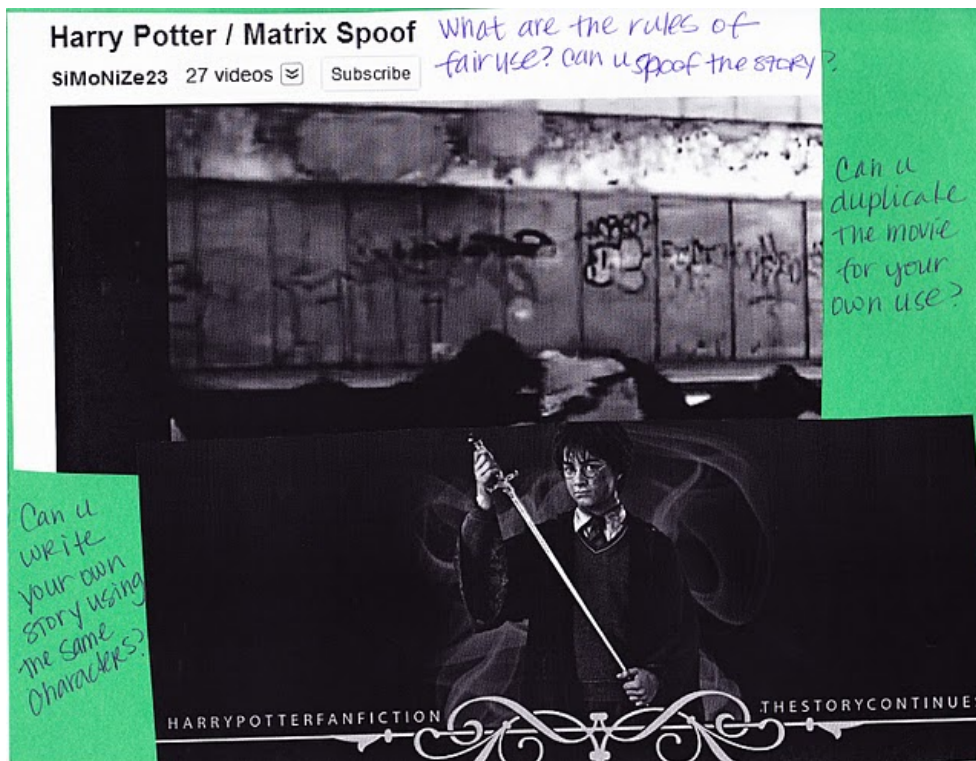
4B. EDGE POINT 2: ANALOG SOLUTIONS FOR DIGITAL PROBLEMS

While only a handful of youth were able to create digital portfolios, the core of the participants created analog portfolios. These prototypes were physical representations of what their VoiceThread would have looked like, were it to live online:



It may be interesting to note that while the print versions are absent the rich multimedia experience of the digital Voicethread, the content is almost identical to what would have been produced online. Theses portfolios contain representations of the same social media projects that the teens would have uploaded into VoiceThread, including written commentary describing their experience as they earned each badge. In this case, the youth are documenting their session on the concept of appropriation, comparing the original song, “It’s a Hard Knock Life,” from the movie version of Annie, with the video by Jay Z. Instead of actually including video clips, which they would have been able to do online, the participants instead printed screen shots of videos from YouTube that they had worked with in the program. This page was followed by the youth sharing the social media project designed to develop their awareness of appropriation.

Again, this reinforces the notion that the library supports these different modes of engagement when it comes to analog art and media production. Library staff were well equipped with paper, pencils and other art supplies to help the teens. This creative solution by the staff allowed the youth to “mess around” with digital media, both their own and those referenced within the program. This is no doubt a practice that is prevalent in many libraries around the world, especially under-funded ones that have fewer technology options.



5. WORKED EXAMPLE C: USING GAMES-BASED ASSESSMENT TO MOTIVATE BEHAVIOR

While the youth participants were learning how to create social media projects, they were also being taught, explicitly, to recognize many of the digital literacies (as defined by Henry Jenkins) which they were learning as a result. To reinforce this language, and the activity of paying attention to their learning, a Digital Transcript was maintained for each youth.

The transcript was composed of badge, one for each literacy. Each triangular-shaped badge offered three ways to complete it, rewarding three different skills: "I can recognize it," "I can talk about it," and "I can do it." At the beginning of the program each youth's Transcript was blank. Over the course of the program youth watched their Transcript grow as badges were earned through completing the social media projects while also submitting pre-existing work (fan fiction, podcasts, etc.) that demonstrated evidence of their existing competencies.

The Transcript served as a feedback mechanism to motivate and guide learning, an alternative transcript to show colleges or prospective employers about abilities that would otherwise go unrecognized, and an educational tool to develop metacognition for the youth to develop the language to describe their newly acquired skills.

Such a badge system could be deemed successful if it guided youth's activities in a constructive direction and/or provided formative feedback that positively affected how youth thought about and approached their learning. However, absent an in-depth research component, the only way library staff could assess the role played by the Digital Transcript was through observation, and interaction with the youth.

But what if youth engagement within an interest-driven learning setting looks different from what the educators expect to see? What if private engagement appears as disinterest? How can an educator learn to tell the difference?

The previous questions were framed by Global Kids, which in general view the badges as a success. A different set of questions can also be asked, namely: Can an alternative assessment strategy like badges be administered by an adult authority figure without the baggage of grades undermining youth's ability to take ownership over the process? Either approach speaks to the challenge of bringing interest-driven engagement into informal learning environments.

5A. EDGE POINT I: A FAILED NEGOTIATION

Ito describes school-based grading systems as a "deferred-gratification model... where [students] are asked to accept that their work in one institutional context (school) will transition at some uncertain time to what they imagine for themselves in the future (work)." She contrasts this with youth's "participation in interest-driven groups and their local friend-based sociability" which "are about status, reputation, and validation in the here and now of their lives." (p. 351) The library staff reported that when the badges were discussed with the youth participants, there was a general lack of enthusiasm from the teens. The badges appeared to be inconsequential: teens wanted to finish the projects for each module, and then get started on the next set of tasks. Teens expressed their opinion to staff that the badges were more of an adult thing, for tracking progress and grading than for rewarding a finished assignment. End of story.

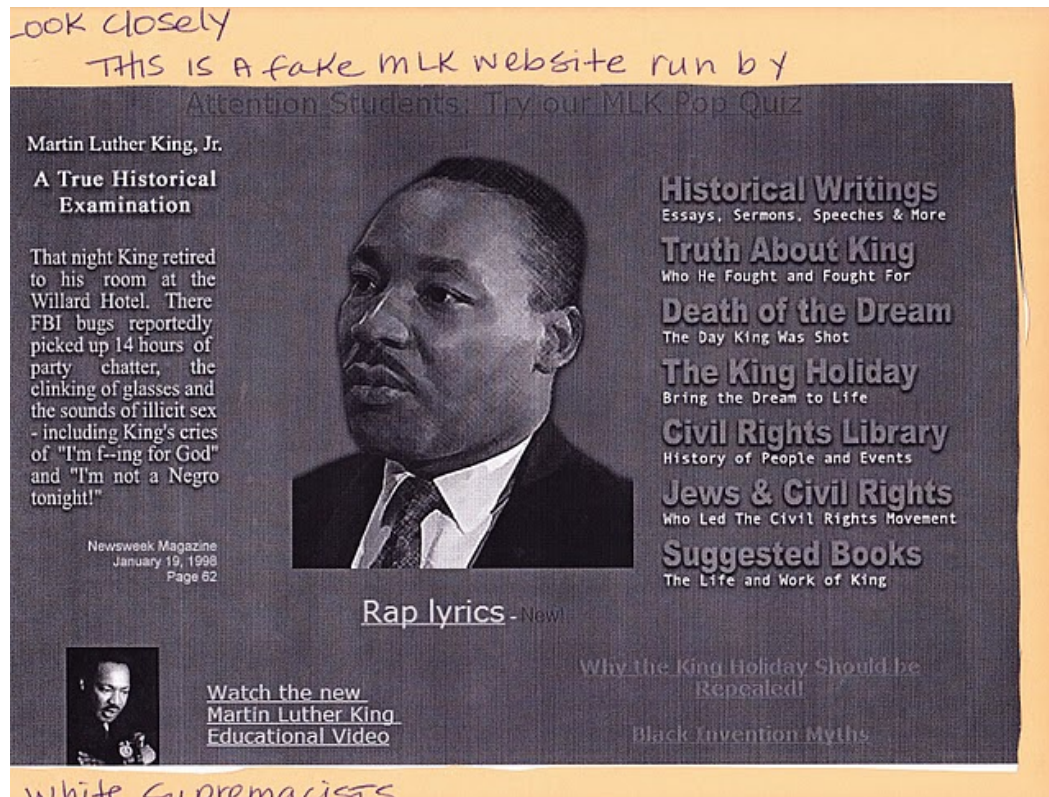
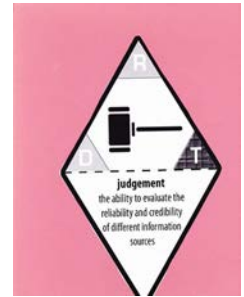
Or is it?

Youth built relationships with the badges that we can see, as they were incorporated (perhaps as directed) into their final portfolios:



The first example is from a Seward Park youth who remixed his Digital Transcript by cutting out the badges, changing how they were displayed, and adding a photo of his face. Note, the corners that have small dark triangles represent earned badges.

This next example shows the badge earned, “judgement,” followed by physical representations of the digital work that earned it (discovering two web sites about Martin Luther King, one fake and run by racists.)



Seward Park librarian Johanna Lewis related that the teens in her program, including the youth who produced the work above, understood the pedagogy behind the badges and how they would earn them. However, she also stated that when it came to actually earning and completing the badges, that both she and the other library staff had to work hard to motivate the teens to use them. In other words, the teens did not seem to perceive the badges as rewards in themselves for completing the program. Perhaps the youth required a deeper engagement with the badges--possibly through a peer community in a social network -- in order to become fully invested. It may be also important to note that the Edge Points illustrated in Worked Example B, the barriers to digital media production, also could have contributed to this disengagement.

However, when Global Kids staff spoke with two of the youth participants, during Emoti-con, a different relationship was described. The youth were excited to show off all the projects they had completed. Afterwards, they showed off their badges. One participant had completed more than the other, leading both to express they wished they had earned more badges. In fact, they both said that

if they were to do the program over again, they would focus on getting more badges, to gain the skills the badges represented, so they could complete their digital transcript. The contrast between the staff's perspective and these youth is stark. And yet, they were precisely what Global Kids experienced with a different partner on a similar use of badges.

In the summer of 2010, Global Kids supported the American Museum of Natural History to use a badge system to motivate and reinforce behavior within a science-related, cellphone-based program. According to the program facilitators, the most active youth seemed to ignore the badges, and never asked nor were heard to speak about them. It was difficult to determine if they even knew what they needed to do to earn a badge.

In response, an online survey was created. The responses was not dissimilar to that heard at Emoti-con:

- “Made me more determined.”
- “Gave me a sense of achievement.”
- “I was pleased to find that I had earned about 8 badges by just completing simple assignments. And unlike in Boy and Girl scouts, they come as a happy surprise, not as a standard you have to work hard to achieve.”
- “If you knew you had a certain badge to earn, it would push you... in order to earn it.”

The youth who earned the most badges reported that “earning a badge for a task motivated me to actually complete what I was supposed to” and “I would go out of my way to do the work to earn the badges,” accomplishing “the tasks that were listed on the badge page so I could get more. It's cool to have a collection of them on your profile.”

While only a handful of youth responded to the survey, it turns out this feedback came from the most engaged youth (including two of the top three most active participants). As their responses came from a request to fill out an online survey, to take an action, that in and of itself should be the source of little surprise. However, this group, which responded loud and clear that they enjoyed and took motivation from the badges, is the same group earlier observed by the staff to display the least interest in them.

This gap between perception and reality echoes the experience with the New York Public Library; while some librarians reported disinterest by youth in the badges, youth reported to Global Kids their great interest. Could this difference arise from the youth-driven nature of the badges, since the public-facing side existed between the learner and the “system,” rather than between learner and teacher, so the invisibility of youth's engagement was misinterpreted as disengagement?

At this point, it is too early to say. This might be a coincidence and wishful thinking of the part of Global Kids. The program design might have failed to incorporate the engagement found within games-based assessment, unintentionally introducing a grading system where it did not belong. In other words, we may have failed to negotiate this edge point dividing the needs of youth for interest-driven learning and the needs of adults to direct that learning.

Then again, it might have worked. The badges might have succeeded in motivating and reinforcing the desired behavior. Mimi Ito raises the question, “How do these practices change the dynamics of

youth-adult negotiations over literacy, learning, and authoritative knowledge?" It is an important question and would suggest that, in this case, we may have failed to negotiate the edge point dividing existing educational practices and how digital media disrupts norms and expectations around youth-adult dynamics.

6. WHAT WE LEARNED

The New York Public Library has always offered opportunities for youth to hang out, mess around and geek out in analog form. Supporting messing around and geeking out with social media using technology, however, presented the Digital Expressions project with several barriers. While the staff initially experienced tension as the program design forced them to move from a “hanging out” to more of a “messing around” mode of engagement, once they saw that youth were engaged and enthusiastic, they were all able to follow their lead. At the same time, while the youth in the programs were able to fulfill the hanging out portion of the learning process, they were not able to mess around to the extent desired due to constraints within the technology infrastructure.

Digital Expressions required the library to reconsider its philosophy on recruiting youth for informal learning programs. That is, it forced the library to think about how it can encourage youth to participate in multiple session programs after school. While the youth seemed excited to attend the programs because of the connections to real world issues and social media, the largest hurdle arose in breaking the old philosophies and doubts that have circulated through the Library from an older organizational philosophy that existed both before social media and the concept of lifelong learning.

However, in its new lifelong learning model, the library is prepared to play a stronger role in supporting learning throughout the day for youth. Projects like Digital Expressions have proved to be an effective model on which to build new curricula that engages youth in serious content.

The most visible barrier was the technology infrastructure that prevented the youth from accessing specific programs they would need to complete the program. They also needed to be able to download and save their content to the library PCs in order to upload their projects into VoiceThread, which was not possible due to security concerns.

In order to offer more of these social media engagement programs to youth in the future, the library should explore more accommodating information technology security structures so that youth and other library learners will have the necessary tools to be able to access and manipulate social media. Or, the departments creating the programs, Public Programs / Lifelong Learning, will need to find unlocked technology environments so that they can support the learning needs of 21st century youth programmatically.

In terms of increasing the awareness of the lifelong learning model of after school programming, the Public Programs / Lifelong Learning (PPLL) division is eager to expand this pilot and continue to seek funds to support learning initiatives such as this.

Introducing Digital Media into Education Programming at The Noguchi Museum

An Edge Project Worked Example, the third in a series

Written by Rebecca Shulman Herz and Barry Joseph

I. INTRODUCING DIGITAL MEDIA INTO EDUCATION PROGRAMMING AT THE NOGUCHI MUSEUM

Digital media is ubiquitous. According to The Pew Internet and American Life Project website, 35% of Americans own smartphones, and 47% of adults use social networking sites. Within art museums, patrons are often seen taking still and video images with a camera or phone, texting or sending a Twitter message to their friends, or listening to music while they view art. For each of these visitors, digital media informs and possibly transforms their museum experience.

Many museums use technology as well as print resources to “mediate,” or engage with the visitor in order to help them understand or appreciate the art on view. Museums often offer podcasts, smartphone apps, audio guides, or written and on-line information. This paper focuses on The Noguchi Museum in New York City, which offers visitors the opportunity to have an unmediated and individual experience with art, and places a high value on this offering. For example, the permanent display on the first floor does not include labels; the art is left up to the visitor to respond to and interpret. Few of the spaces include stanchions or glass vitrines, furthering the unmediated feeling of the space: the visitor can get very close to the art, with nothing between the art and him or herself. This is an unusual experience for a museum-goer, and one that The Noguchi Museum is wary of disrupting.

Noguchi Museum patrons carry cameras and cellphones, and expect to use digital tools to mediate their lives; many of them use these devices to play music, take pictures, share their experience with others, and look up information, both within the Museum and before and after their visit. This can be seen as an opportunity: how might the Museum build on the ubiquitous nature of these digital devices to attract and inform patrons? The Noguchi Museum maintains a web site and communicates via social media. Beyond this, however, how might the Museum use digital media to support and enrich the visitor experience without undermining the values of the Museum?

This question is even more immediate within the realm of youth programs, as teen use of and expectations for digital media use are high. Research from the Pew Research Center shows that 75% of teens own cell phones, nearly 80% own mp3 players, and nearly 70% use social networking sites. These statistics raise an intriguing question about teen expectations for digital experiences with in museum galleries, and in museum youth programs. Can a museum designed for “unmediated” experiences with non-digital art such as sculpture and design support youth to produce digital media projects that embrace and further the museum’s values?

2. THE NOGUCHI MUSEUM'S TEEN ADVISORY BOARD

In Fall of 2010, Global Kids approached The Noguchi Museum to discuss a possible Edge Project. The Museum is devoted to the preservation, documentation, presentation, and interpretation of the work of Isamu Noguchi. Founded in 1985, the Museum is the first in America established by a living artist and dedicated to his own work. It contains the world's richest holdings of Noguchi's art.

The Noguchi Museum's Teen Advisory Board, or TAB, began in 2005. The program is a central component of the Museum's programming for teens. TAB accepts up to 12 youth each year; members meet bi-weekly, and, after building their own expertise around the work of Isamu Noguchi and The Noguchi Museum, plan at least one event for teens at the Museum and advise the Museum on any teen-related matters.

The 2010-11 TAB program year began with a number of sessions dedicated to introducing youth to the Museum and Noguchi's art, through looking at art, making art, interviewing staff, and exploring restricted areas of the Museum. This early work was essential to both the teens' understanding of the Museum and to the teens' comfort representing the Museum. It was also essential that this introduction be leisurely and open, allowing the teens to form their own personal responses to the Museum and the art on view.

In December, the teens were ready to embark upon a technology-based project in partnership with Global Kids. Because TAB members are representatives of The Noguchi Museum, and because choice-making is so essential to the artistic process, it was important to Noguchi staff that the teens frame their own project. Therefore, Noguchi and Global Kids staff introduced this project by showing TAB examples of a wide variety of digital media projects, including podcasting, digital storytelling, and working with Quick Response (QR) codes (barcodes readable by smartphones that lead users to a web link or other data). Once teens had seen and discussed different models of digital projects, they could decide what sort of project they would create.

Eventually, the students decided to create a digital storytelling product about The Noguchi Museum, intended to be viewed outside the Museum by their peers. It was important to them that the digital project included images, as they felt that their peers are very visual. It was also important to them that the project not interfere with a first-time visitor's experience with and response to the work on view.



Produced and directed by youth members of the Teen Advisory Board (TAB) this video was created to share the experience of the TAB members as well as promote the Noguchi Museum to prospective teen visitors to the museum. Click to view: <http://youtu.be/NziZFKAG4v0>

Isamu Noguchi lived from 1904-1988, and during his lifetime experimented with a number of technological innovations. He explored ways of integrating metal rods into marble sculptures. He created folded aluminum sculptures using a machine called a Leaf Press, used by lighting designers. He transformed traditional Japanese lanterns by electrifying them, and traditional Japanese water basins by inserting electric pumps to circulate the water. He was one of the first artists to propose environmental art, and continuously pushed the limits of what could be considered sculpture. Noguchi did not create digital art; his interest lay in media such as stone, clay, wood, and metal.

Both Global Kids and Noguchi Museum staff had anticipated that integrating digital media into TAB would be a challenging experience for the Museum. The Museum felt strongly that this was a worthwhile challenge, as teens have a well-documented interest in digital media. Noguchi educators have experienced this interest in smaller digital projects with teens, such as a blog and performance videos. However, this more ambitious TAB project would require on-site technology resources in an institution which has historically chosen not to invest in the technology infrastructure or staff expertise needed for technology-based education programs.

As this project was originally envisioned, one of the goals was to create a product available to the public. This was important both for the teens and for the institution. Therefore, it also demanded a framework for a project that would be of a quality to be publicly viewed, and which would uphold the vision that Isamu Noguchi had, and Museum staff continue to uphold, for this museum.

Thus, while there were important considerations constraining the use of learning through digital media, there were also forces encouraging it. Noguchi staff understood the potential conflicts in developing this project, defining edge points that would need to be negotiated along the way.

Therefore, when Global Kids offered the Museum the opportunity to develop an Edge Project, Museum administrators were eager to take advantage of this opportunity. It was the hope of Museum Education staff that this project could help the Museum better understand the role digital media might play within TAB and other on-site educational programming. The following examples will illustrate the edge points encountered by the Museum, and how this partnership was able to address, work through, or circumnavigate around them.

3. WORKED EXAMPLE A: 21ST CENTURY TECHNOLOGY IN A 20TH CENTURY SPACE

The Noguchi Museum offers a quiet, unmediated space in an industrial neighborhood of New York City. Museum galleries are filled with sculptures which do not utilize digital technology, and, as previously stated, displays the artwork in as “unmediated” a manner as possible, eschewing labels in selected galleries, and choosing not to offer audio guides or other digital interpretive tools. This project forced us to ask: in an age dominated by digital technology, how can we bring this technology into a program while remaining true to Noguchi’s vision?

3A. EDGE POINT: WORKING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A 20TH CENTURY ARTIST WHO CREATED AN UNMEDIATED SPACE

Isamu Noguchi died in 1988, before the Internet, podcasts, or cell phones became popular. His art is interactive in visionary ways; Noguchi considered place as sculpture and often explored how people move through and respond to spaces. The museum itself can be understood as one of Noguchi’s works: a sculptural space, blurring the line between inside and outside. The Museum contains a screening room, in which a documentary about the artist is shown, and uses technology such as projections in its public programs. No audio guides are offered, nor does the Museum offer podcasts or other digital products intended for use in the galleries while viewing art.

Educators and youth grappled with the question of how to pair digital media with Noguchi’s sculptures and spaces. The TAB youth were wary of allowing technology, or their own personalities via technology, to interfere with the visitor experience. They felt that visitors should first experience the space themselves, without any input from others. So, for example, while they were interested in what songs might complement different sculptures and how music could be used in a podcast or audio guide, they did not want to impose their musical selections on first-time visitors.

Ultimately, the youth decided not to engage directly in the visitor’s direct experience with the sculpture, as with an audio tour. Instead, they decided to create a stand-alone product that illuminates the sculpture, and highlights the aspects of the Museum and sculpture that attract each of them personally. The video encourages people to visit the Museum, but does not interfere with the immediate experience of the art in the galleries.



TAB student discusses her relationship to the Noguchi Museum and the choices made to create a digital media project that kept intact their relationship to the space and art in the museum. Click to view: <http://youtu.be/LSyWtP6phqI>

The product is, in this sense, a very traditional documentary product. The TAB youth's sensitivity to the visitors' experience with Noguchi's art evidences that staff succeeded in helping youth to understand and respect the culture of the Museum and the intent of the artist, ensuring that teens became knowledgeable and savvy public representatives of the Museum. Rather than create something that would mediate patrons' experience within the museum, the youth created something that would mediate their experience with the very idea of the museum, to inspire them to come in person and start their own relationship with Noguchi, translating the Noguchi experience into our digital age without disrespecting his original artistic intent.

4. WORKED EXAMPLE B: ENGAGING IN A DIGITAL MEDIA PROJECT WITHIN AN INSTITUTION WITH LIMITED DIGITAL MEDIA INFRASTRUCTURE

The Noguchi Museum can function as an oasis from the digital media intruding on our lives. The artwork is very physical and sensory: for example, abstract basalt and marble sculptures that are near-human-sized; low bronze floor sculptures that alter the way we move through a space. As previously discussed, Noguchi's vision is not anti-technology. However, he used technology in the creation of his art, rather than in its display. He considered the Museum "a place to reflect and to see an alternative existence." (*Art News*, 1986, p 109)

The Museum's staff do their best to ensure that the Museum galleries continue to realize Noguchi's vision. This concern with Noguchi's vision is also captured in the Museum's youth programming. The Education Department has focused on offering on-site workshops in traditional visual arts,

rather than digital media arts, experiences. These include a variety of sculptural media, often echoing artistic strategies used by Noguchi such as abstract form, interlocking pieces, textural experimentation, and mixed media.

As a result, TAB had never required a wired classroom. TAB youth had never been asked to edit digital video or create audio pieces as part of the TAB program. At the same time, the Head of Education had never written lesson plans for or led technology-based projects. As part of the partnership with Global Kids, however, Noguchi staff expected TAB members to create a digital product, and needed to identify staff resources and facilities to support these efforts. To do so required negotiating two edge points.

4A. EDGE POINT 1: AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGY

This project required Noguchi Museum staff to take stock of the technological resources available for educational programming. Within the Museum offices, the Museum offers staff the technological resources commonly found in an office environment: networked computers with Internet, printers, and a photocopy/scanning machine. For public programs, the Museum owns a laptop, two projectors and a DVD player, with a high-speed Internet connection available by wire. The Museum does not offer wireless Internet access or remote access to files for staff. (After the completion of the TAB program, the Museum brought wireless Internet access into the Museum's Education Room, and purchased an additional laptop for use in public programs.) The Noguchi Museum's Education Department owns an audio recorder, a video recorder, and a camera. It does not own laptops or cameras for student use. For this project, The Noguchi Museum relied on Global Kids resources, including 3 laptops, audio and video software, a flip camera, and a digital recorder.

While inventorying technology, education staff realized that some teens arrive at the Museum with their own laptops in their backpacks, and are willing to use these for programming. Staff also identified high quality cameras owned by other Museum departments, available for use by the Education Department. By temporarily integrating Global Kids' and the youth's existing resources with the Noguchi's, Museum staff were able to ensure the program had the proper technology to produce the video. In the end, the youth used digital recorders to capture their voices, explored the Museum's digital photo collection to select their images, worked in Garage Band to edit their audio, and brought the elements together within iMovie.

This digital media inventory helped the Education Department consider and prepare for future technology needs. While it identified areas of limited technology, it also highlighted previously unrealized resources.

4B. EDGE POINT 2: CAN AN OLD(ER) EDUCATOR LEARN NEW TRICKS?

TAB is taught by the Head of Education, Rebecca Shulman Herz. Rebecca does not have any training in or experience with digital media education, nor has she used digital media for projects such as podcasting or video editing. Therefore, it was determined that another Edge Point is the instructional expertise of the TAB staff.

While theoretically it would be manageable for Rebecca to learn a program, such as Garage Band

or iMovie, to use with youth programming, a hallmark of this project was that students chose the project based on a number of digital media options. It was not possible for Noguchi staff to provide youth such a wide range of options and learn the program in the time required before the next session.

Yet, while uncovering this lack of expertise, the instructors found a previously unknown wealth of expertise in the TAB members. Many youth were very comfortable exploring and using digital programs that were new to them, and learned these programs quickly. Most of the audio, for example, was edited in Garage Band in one session by a youth who had never previously used this or any other audio editing program.



TAB student speaks about her experience learning digital media and how her surprise at discovering that she could create a 2:30 minute audio/image project in 2 and half hours. Click to view:
<http://youtu.be/37g71LAoPGM>

The instructors also identified the potential of one of the Noguchi Educators who assists with the TAB program, Anne Spurgeon, to use her expertise as a video maker within the context of TAB. These previously unmined assets led to the question of whether it is possible to offer digital media education programs using technology with which the lead instructor is not familiar. As of Summer 2011, Noguchi education staff intends to offer youth the opportunity to engage in these projects, and are confident that they can find ways to support them even without prior staff expertise in specific programs.

5. CONCLUSION

The Noguchi Museum completed the Edge Project partnership with Global Kids with a sense that a digital media project is a particularly strong type of activity to offer teens, for a number of reasons. First, it proved to be a good platform for collaboration. Second, teens brought a number of important

strengths to the table, and these strengths were clearly visible to them. And third, the product was public and useful - an excellent public service announcement for The Noguchi Museum.

The Museum continues to face challenges in leading teens in technology projects, in particular the lack of digital equipment and staff expertise. For 2011-12, educators intend to engage TAB members in a dialogue about possible digital and non-digital projects, their interest-level in these projects, and the resources that staff and students might bring to the table, opening up these “edge points” to be addressed by the teens themselves. Through dialogue, strategic curriculum planning, and identifying Museum and outside resources, the Education Department is confident that it is feasible to lead technology projects within this teen program. Ultimately, if digital production becomes an important part of teen programming and is seen as an asset, the infrastructure (staff expertise and equipment) will be put in place to better support this work on a continuous basis.

As important as it was for the Museum to experiment with digital technology education projects, it was equally important to engage in a project that was extraordinarily open-ended, allowing youth to begin their decision-making by deciding what their project would be. This decision-making felt highly appropriate for a teen advisory board program which serves as small group of trusted, invested youth who want to make a lasting contribution to the Museum.



TAB youth at the Noguchi Museum talks about guidelines given to her while creating a digital media project for the museum. Click to view: <http://youtu.be/P74FjkU45lw>

Noguchi Museum staff complete this partnership with a strong sense of the Museum’s edge points, and how to negotiate them. The partnership served as a structure that both pushed the Museum to try something new and provided a safety net in the form of technological expertise and equipment.

Appendix A:

The Inquiry Behind the Program Design

We began this project by asking ourselves a variety of questions, within three areas of inquiry. As we are not researchers, we consulted with academics to guide us in our mechanisms for capturing data from the project. The area of inquiry and questions were:

1) THE EDGE

- A: How do educators navigate the disruptive force of new media in education, both at an institutional and a personal level? What obstacles were in the way and how did they approach them? How do the different cultures and pedagogies of civic and cultural institutions engender different responses?
- B: What attitudes, capabilities and expectations are required by educators and youth within these institutions to lead to successful implementation of innovative new media programs? How do the different cultures and pedagogies of civic and cultural institutions engender different requirements?

2) DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ECOLOGIES

- A. In what ways do youth bring learning into digital youth media programs at civic and cultural institutions from other nodes, how do they perceive the ecology created (if at all) and their roles within it, and what can digital media afford them to make better sense of it all?
- B. How do facilitators understand how youth situate themselves within their learning ecology, how do they leverage that within the program design, and how does that shape their own understanding of their own roles and practices? How do the different cultures and pedagogies of civic and cultural institutions engender different understandings?

3) LEVERAGING DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ECOLOGIES WITHIN NEW MEDIA PROGRAMS AT CIVIC AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

- A. How can each hub make this process more transparent, leverage it as a strength, and empower youth to navigate it?
- B. How does an educational program leveraging new media allow greater affordances for youth to draw upon their learning from across their distributed learning network?

The design of this project was also informed by and aimed to contribute to the recent body of work funded by the MacArthur Foundation to understand youth learning through digital media in programs outside school time. Anne Balsamo's [Designing Culture: The Technological Imagination](#)

[at Work](#) offers a deep literature review of new media practices in museums and libraries. [Digital Media and Technology in Youth-Serving Organizations](#), co-authored by Becky Herr-Stephenson, Diana Rhoten, Dan Perkel, and Christo Sims, historicizes education within afterschool programs, museums and libraries, offers frameworks for categorizing current new media practices, and recommends areas for future research. Finally, when this project first began, efforts were underway in both Chicago and [New York City](#) to launch what is now known as the [Hive Learning Network](#), a community of civic and cultural institutions dedicated to transforming the learning landscape and creating opportunities for youth to explore their interests in virtual and physical spaces; a number of Hive member organizations ended up participating within the Edge Projects.

Appendix B:

The Questions We Asked

Global Kids asked the partner organizations to complete a brief written questionnaire, which was followed by an interview in person, over the phone, or over Skype. Their responses to the questionnaire informed the interview, which was captured using some recording device for eventual transcription.

The interviews occurred at various times but all were between the first initial conversations about the project to the day before the youth begin the project.

I) THE PARTNER WRITTEN PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE WAS AS FOLLOWS:

[Note: The following questions are designed to elicit responses to GK's Questions (1A) as follows: How do educators navigate the disruptive force of new media in education, both at an institutional and a personal level? What obstacles were in the way and how did they approach them? How do the different cultures and pedagogies of civic and cultural institutions engender different responses?]

Q: What is your institution's history in using new media for education?

Q: How does this project fit within the larger direction of your organization?

Q: How are the unique strengths or attributes of your institution shaping the design of the program and how it's incorporating new media?

[Note: The following questions are designed to elicit responses to Questions (1B) as follows: What attitudes, capabilities and expectations are required by educators and youth within these institutions to lead to successful implementation of innovative new media programs? How do the different cultures and pedagogies of civic and cultural institutions engender different requirements?]

Q: What attitudes, capabilities and expectations are required by your program from the youth for it to succeed?

Q: What attitudes, capabilities and expectations are required by your program from you (or the staff person working directly with the youth) for it to succeed?

[Note: The following questions are designed to elicit responses to Questions (2B) as follows: How do facilitators understand how youth situate themselves within their learning ecology, how do they leverage that within the program design, and how does that shape their own understanding of their own roles and practices? How do the different cultures and pedagogies of civic and cultural institutions engender different understandings?]

Q: What assumptions are you making about the larger learning ecologies of the youth coming into your program?

Q: How will these assumptions inform your program design?

Q: To what extent does your understanding of your institution as one of many nodes within a youth's broader learning ecology shape your institution's practices and role in the community?

2) THE PARTNER INTERVIEW PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE WAS AS FOLLOWS:

1. Review their responses to the written questions about their institutions history with new media and how the current program fits into this history if further clarification is required to define how this is an example of their "working on the edge."
2. Ask: What is your personal history in using new media for education? What will it mean for you to have done this program?
3. Ask: What obstacles do you foresee in implementing the program? How might you address them? Note to interviewer: Make sure that both institutional and personal obstacles are addressed in the response.
4. Review their responses to the written questions about attitudes, capabilities and expectations required and ask follow-ups are necessary to make sure all three were addressed for both the youth and for you.
5. Review their responses to the written questions pertaining to assumptions about youth's distributed learning networks and look for interesting areas for follow-up to clarify them and for further elaboration.
6. Ask: Is there something we didn't ask that you want to tell us? Is there anything else we should know? Anything interesting?

3) THE PARTNER WRITTEN POST-QUESTIONNAIRE WAS AS FOLLOWS:

1. Did the program meet your expectations for what could be accomplished and, if so, in what ways?
2. Upon reviewing what you anticipated were the attitudes, capabilities and expectations for the educators for the program to be a success, were you correct? Or were there other attributes that were more important?
3. Upon reviewing what you anticipated were the attitudes, capabilities and expectations for the youth participants for the program to be a success, were you correct? Or were there other attributes that were more important?
4. As a reminder, the learning maps exercise was intended to allow you or your educators to have deeper insight into where learning takes place for the program's youth. Was this information used by you or the educators when implementing the program? If so, in what ways? Please provide examples.
5. Did the youth bring into the program knowledge and skills from across their learning networks? If so, in what ways?
6. This program incorporated digital media as a form of youth expression. In what ways, if at all, did working with digital media affect the ability of youth to draw from knowledge and skills that they had obtained from their learning networks?
7. Are there any anecdotes you can share that exemplify some aspect of what it meant to for

- this to be an "Edge Project," whether about the institution, the youth, or the educator?
8. Is there something we didn't ask that you want to tell us? Is there anything else we should know? Anything interesting?

4) THE PARTNER INTERVIEW POST-QUESTIONNAIRE WAS AS FOLLOWS:

1. Ask: Given your history of using digital media for education, what does it mean for you to have completed this "Edge Project"? Where did it push you past your comfort zone? Where did it push your institution? Did the line that defines the "edge" shift as a result?
2. NOTE: Review the obstacles that they mentioned in the pre-interview. Then Ask: What obstacles did you encounter in implementing the program? How did you address them? (Note to interviewer: Make sure that both institutional and personal obstacles are addressed in the response.)
3. Review the youth media and get their feedback. ASK: In retrospect, how do these youth media assets reflect working on the edge?
4. Ask: Is there something we didn't ask that you want to tell us? Is there anything else we should know? Anything interesting?



Global Kids, Inc. - the premier non-profit educational organization for global learning and youth development - works to ensure that urban youth have the knowledge, skills, experiences and values they need to succeed in school, participate effectively in the democratic process, and achieve leadership in their communities and on the global stage.

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The Global Kids Online Leadership Program (OLP) integrates a youth development approach and international and public policy issues into youth media programs that build digital literacy, foster substantive online dialogues, develop resources for educators, and promote civic participation.

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