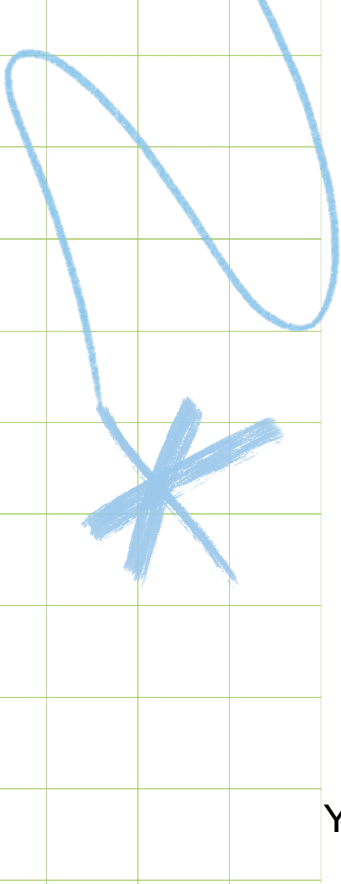# Volunteering to Learn:

Harnessing Fun to Motivate Students

While We Wait...

Write a list of special places or traditions from your institution, local landmarks, or local historical figures that you feel you could tell a story about.

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

Volunteering to Learn:

Harnessing Fun to Motivate Students

Laura Barrett, Head of Teaching & Learning, Dartmouth

Jentry Campbell, Librarian for Research & Learning - STEM, Dartmouth

Alexis Gomez, Evening Circulation & Reserves Supervisor, Dartmouth

Yolanda Hood, First-Year Experience and Instruction Coordinator, UMass Lowell

California Conference on Library Instruction

May 31, 2024

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES

UMASS LOWELL

2

Agenda

1. Place-based Play & Instruction

2. Designing an Iterative Process

3. Our Three Projects

4. Testing, Playing, & Advertising

5. Assessment

6. Discussion & Questions

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL
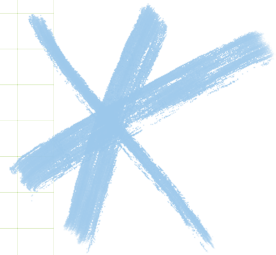
Place Based Play and Library Instruction

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES

UMASS LOWELL

Raise your hand if you.....

- remember a play-based educational experience in college or graduate school

- regularly incorporate play in your teaching and outreach

- have held back on sharing a play-based idea because you thought your colleagues might not approve

- had your play-based ideas celebrated by your colleagues and/or supervisors

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

Play can be perceived as childish and anti-intellectual, incompatible with a serious and rigorous college education.

(James & Nerantzi, 2019)

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

Why Play in Library Instruction?

Play is state of mind that one has when absorbed in an activity that provides enjoyment and a suspension of sense of time. And play is self-motivated so you want to do it again and again.
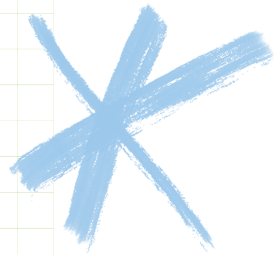
(Brown, 2009, p. 60)

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

Why Place-Based Play?

*Students who typically had a higher **sense of belonging** than their peers tended to also have higher emotional and behavioral engagement in college.*

(Gillen-O'Neel, 2021)

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

Make It, Try It, Iterate: Design Thinking

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES

UMASS LOWELL

Identifying Knowledge Gaps

Existing Logistical Barriers:

- Fewer class instruction opportunities

- High student to librarian ratio (too many classes, too few librarians)

- Students without foundational knowledge of how to use the library (navigation, finding materials, checkout process)

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

What Solutions Should Do:

Goals of our play-based interventions:

1. Highlight the library as a resource
2. Familiarize students with library spaces
3. Teach basic library research skills
4. Make library learning FUN

Creating a Plan

1) Identify the learning objectives and the objects that represent this

2) Identify actions players have to complete to progress

3) Identify the place-based narrative to tie it all together

4) Create a reasonable timeline for the work, including playtesting and early iterations

Good Enough…For Now

(Aflafla1, 2014)
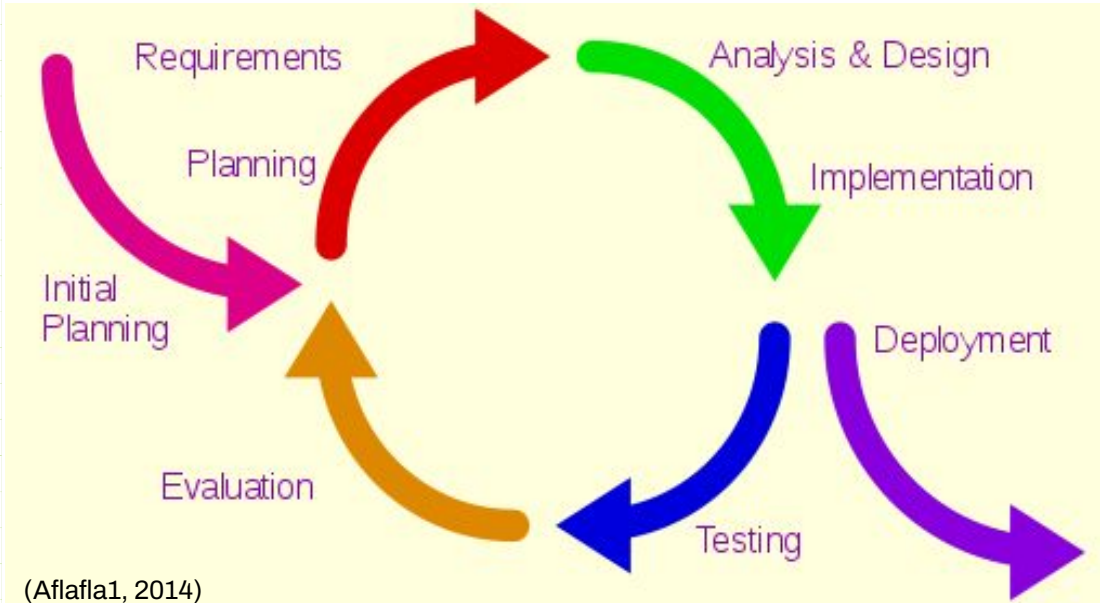
Iterative design allows new features to be added and existing problems to be corrected.
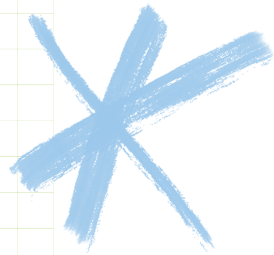
Our 3 Play Based Examples

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES

UMASS LOWELL

Example 1: Agents of Time

What Was It:
- Hybrid escape-room style experience

Learning Outcomes:
- Familiarity with key spaces
- Knowing how to get help
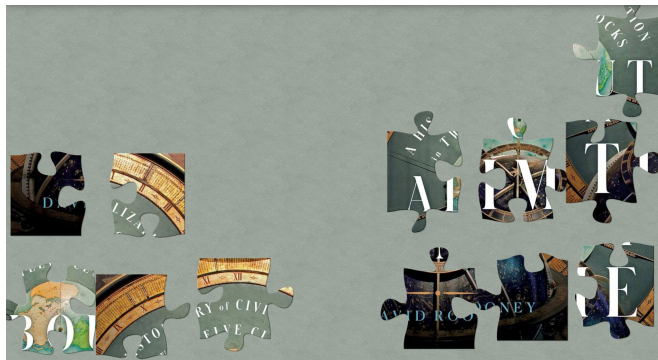- Accessing basic search skills/tools

Staff Timing and Maintenance:
- 3 Librarians
- 1 year development time
- Asynchronous play, low maintenance

Place-Based Anchor:
- Iconic Baker-Berry Library clock tower

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | **UMASS LOWELL**

Playing Agents of Time

Can you decipher the timekeeper's clues?

In the heaRt of a quaint town stands a majEstic clock tower, guarding a centurieS-old secret. Curious lEarners are drawn to its enigmatic allure, embArking on a life-altering quest. Guided by legends, learners venture into the tower's labyRinthine chambers, deCiphering cryptic puzzles and avoiding perilous traps. WitHin the intricate gears lies a hidden clue, rumored to shape history. As the students race aGainst time, a shadowy figUre emerges to claim the clue's omInous power. Blurring the bounDaries of past and presEnt, their courage and wit are teSted. Uncover the clock tower's secrets in this captivating tale of mystery and adventure.

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

Example 2: Library Maze & Riddles

What Was It:
- Scavenger hunt style game

Learning Outcome:
- To familiarize students with library physical spaces, library staff, and library services

Staff Timing and Maintenance:
- Planning committee of 12, met weekly
- 1-day, 2-hour event; 2 hours of set up and take down time
- Swag, decorations, candy, clue prep

Place-Based Anchor:
- Labyrinthian library spaces and stacks
- Library ghost

Solving Library Maze Riddles

This is the place you should go

When searching for ancient knowledge you mightn't know!

Go here to pick up your requested tomes.

Go here to ask which way to roam.

The staff here are a motley crew.

And if you ask, they'll surely help you.

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

Example 3: Jolly Jane Escape Room

What Was It:
- Physical escape room

Learning Outcome:
- Students will have hands-on experiences with library resources
- Students will meet library staff

Staff Timing and Maintenance:
- Planned and coordinated over 6 weeks with student assistant and 2 librarians
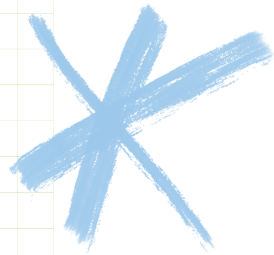
Place-Based Anchor:
- Infamous local historical figure, Jolly Jane
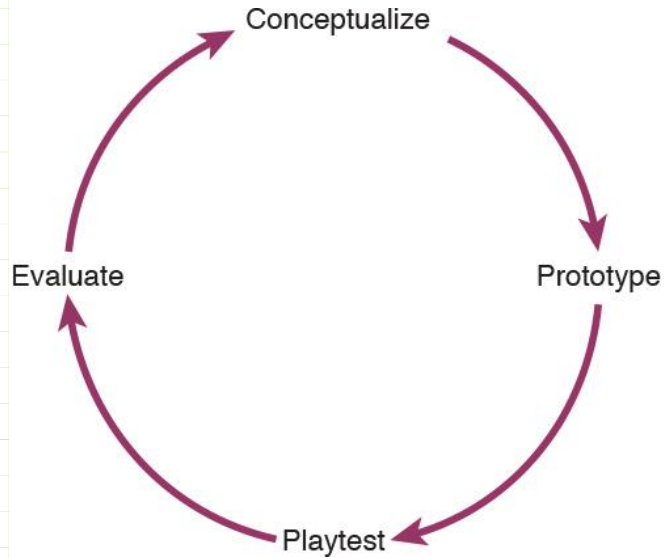
Brainstorm Your Own!

- Discuss the place-based anchors you brainstormed at the start with your neighbor.

- Identify activities or goals your game could have.

- What methods of instruction or play would be most useful for your library?

Testing, Playing , & Advertising

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

The Importance of Play Testing

Conceptualize → Prototype → Playtest → Evaluate → Conceptualize

- Designers always know what they mean

- Player perspective uncovers technical errors and design misunderstandings

- Allows for small changes before launch

- Can bring up surprising revelations:
  - New students didn't know how to navigate Canvas

Fig 5.2 from Macklin & Sharp 2016

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES

UMASS LOWELL

Leverage Student Time

- Paid work or graded learning time

  - Creating student facing advertising

  - Paid play testing

  - Human Centered Design student projects

- Emphasis on current student understanding and experience

← View the whole ghost video

Advertising Design & Canva

- Design makes things look more fun

- Design tools like Canva are your friend!
  - Easy design, cost effective printing services

- Physical & digital advertising

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES

UMASS LOWELL

It's gotta have a prize!

- Themed and/or branded

- Useful, fun or edible
  - If it is a contained event, providing a meal or substantial snack

- Cumulative finishing prize or station based prizes

- Can work as advertising

Brainstorm Your Own!

- What groups would you play test with?

- What campus partnerships could you leverage for design or testing?

- Where would you advertise your game?

- What prizes might be appropriate?
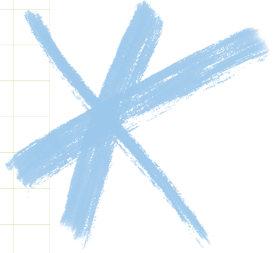
Assessment

Challenges, Successes, and Lessons

Assessing Agents of Time

- Canvas enrollment and engagement numbers

- Participants were equally self-motivated and externally-motivated

- Most who started the module completed it

- Some were unclear how to start, and others started but got stuck or ran out of time

- Participants reported learning how to get help from Libraries staff

- Suggestions Included making the module longer and the tasks more challenging

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

Maze Feedback

LIBRARY SCAVENGER HUNT

FEEDBACK FORM

Tell us what you think!

- Students had fun and want more events like this

- Rolling start is preferable to scheduled start times

- Advertise more in the future

- Swag and decorations are great for luring in curious students

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

Jolly Jane Feedback & Takeaways

MISS JANE TOPPAN.

- Library re-connected with a vital population and university program (28 students)

- Students saw and interacted with library spaces and staff

- Students enjoyed the freedom to play

- Students want opportunities to meet others without awkwardness

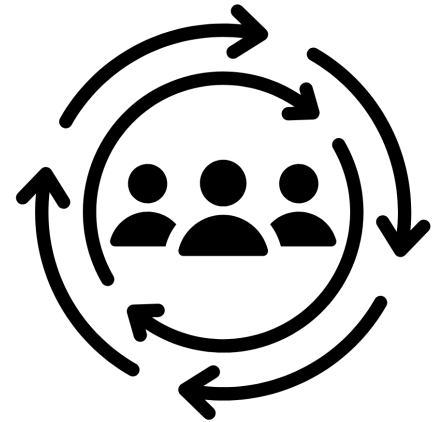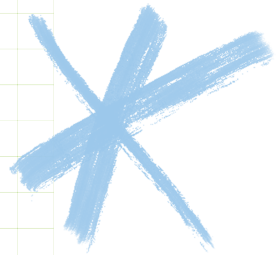DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

In Summary

Play increases participation

Place-based play can create belonging

Iterate your ideas to grow them!

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

Questions

DARTMOUTH
LIBRARIES

UMASS
LOWELL

Bibliography

Aflafla1. (2014). *English: Iterative development model*. Iterative development model V2.jpg , User:Westerhoff.

Davis, J. (2010). *The first-generation student experience: Implications for campus practice, and strategies for improving persistence and success* (1st ed). Stylus.

Forbes, L. (2021). The process of playful learning in higher education: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, *15*(1), 57–73.

Gillen-O'Neel, C. (2021). Sense of Belonging and Student Engagement: A Daily Study of First- and Continuing-Generation College Students. *Research in Higher Education, 62(1)*, 45–71.

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL

Bibliography

James, A., & Nerantzi, C. (2019). *The power of play in higher education: Creativity in tertiary learning*. Springer International Publishing.

Macklin, C., & Sharp, J. (2016). *Games, design and play: A detailed approach to iterative game design* (First edition). Addison-Wesley.

Rose, E. J., & Reimer, C. (2022). Iteration. In J. C. K. Tham (Ed.), *Keywords in Design Thinking: A Lexical Primer for Technical Communicators & Designers* (pp. 45–48). The WAC Clearinghouse; University Press of Colorado.

Stuart Brown. (2009). *Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul.* Penguin Random House.

DARTMOUTH LIBRARIES | UMASS LOWELL