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## PROMOTING INFORMATION LITERACY THROUGH A STUDENT VIDEO CONTEST

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### Concordia's Video Contest:

**The task.** Students create a short film or vignette that deals with the idea of information literacy or an aspect of IL.

Student videos will be evaluated and judged. Prizes will be given. The videos will be used by the library to promote services or to teach information literacy concepts.

### BACKGROUND TO A VIDEO CONTEST: USER-GENERATED CONTENT & FANSOURCING/CROWDSOURCING

The privileging of **user-generated content**, the stuff of much of the 2.0 Web, has been a strong and consistent trend in recent years. Increasing bandwidth and availability of digital recording tools and processing software has enabled a typical Internet user to create and disseminate a variety of textual, audio or video works — something that not long ago was reserved for artistic or technical professionals.

Corporations have tapped into this 'do-it-yourself' trend to engage fans or consumers in communicating their message. This is called **fansourcing** or **crowdsourcing**, and it typically uses computer mediated technologies to task individuals with creative endeavours for the benefit of a product, group or institution.

For example, the eight contenders in the 2007 CNN/YouTube Democratic presidential candidate debate fielded from US citizens questions received via YouTube, the popular video

sharing site. In other crowd-sourced examples, Doritos, Chevrolet and the National Football League used their multi-million-dollar television advertising time slots during the 2007 Super Bowl to run ads created by consumers. As well, cultural institutions have embraced this strategy (1). In 2007, Radio Canada International launched the Métissé Serré video contest. And libraries have also gotten into the crowdsourcing game: to promote its new website last October, the City of Montréal Libraries launched its BiblioClip contest.

Of course, one could wonder why individuals would engage in what amounts to free work for these organizations. Yochai Benkler has attempted to address this issue by analyzing the factors that motivate individuals to give away their labour for free (2). Benkler determined that the rewards for this are usually monetary, hedonistic or socio-psychological. **Monetary**

**motivators** are essentially cash awards, as are seen in various contests. **Hedonistic motivation** stems from the pleasure of accomplishing a specific task for its own sake — for example, the joys of creating a great video. Finally, **socio-psychological rewards** have to do with an individual's perception by and of a group of peers, including making them envious of or exerting increased social status with an accomplishment.

**Holding a video contest to raise awareness of information literacy and library instruction** has its own crowdsourced benefits. It engages students in IL advocacy, and it also develops promotional assets — the videos themselves — which can be used by libraries. It also leverages the immense creative potential of our students while positioning the library within the context of life on campus.

[Please see references on p. 4.]

# WILU 37

Information Literacy *UNCORKED*  
La culture de l'information débouchée

Kelowna, British Columbia  
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## VIDEO CONTESTS: A NICHE CULTURE ON THE WEB

Video contests are becoming something of a **niche culture** or a niche activity on the social Web. An increasing number of websites and online databases are dedicated to tracking video contests by corporations or cultural institutions.

These web-based video contests call us to point and shoot and send it in; whereas in the early- to mid-1990s the call to produce video-for-reward was put to those with means — video industry insiders or those who owned the equipment (bulky and expensive for its time) — it is now

the everyperson of the Web who is asked to upload a clip, artistically edited or shot on-the-fly with a handheld camera.

Getting into the video contest phenomenon are educational institutions and corporations that have a publishing or information component. Companies such as World Book (the encyclopedia publishers) and Thomson-Gale have created video contests. EDUCAUSE, one of the leading trade periodicals in the field of higher education and educational technology, sponsor an annual video contest on computer security

awareness.

Concordia University Libraries would like to experiment with the idea of a video contest as a way to promote greater awareness of information literacy amongst the student population. A video contest could promote our libraries' services, particularly our information literacy workshops. The contest could be a type of teaching and learning tool as well as a promotional mechanism. It could be a means for us to explore the relationship between information literacy and media literacy.



Concordia University Libraries  
(Webster Library), Montreal, Quebec

## PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS: VIDEO-MAKING AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

Concordia University Libraries also wants to approach its video contest as a potential constructivist learning activity. **Constructivism** is that body of learning theory that holds up students as active agents in their formation of their own understanding of concepts and material. Its foremost proponents, particularly Lev Vygotsky, have proclaimed the unique social aspect of constructivism — that learning is inherently done between or amongst learners rather than in isolation. Even the metacognitive

act of personal reflection carries a certain social dynamic as one negotiates one's ideas with those of others.

Creating a video for a contest has the potential to be a constructivist learning activity. Students need to come to their own ideas about what constitutes information literacy and how that understanding how could be conveyed on film.

Related to constructivism is the notion of **'problem-based**

**learning.'** Our hope is that students consider the task of our video contest to be a way of dealing with their uncertainty or lack of understanding of the nature of information literacy. The point of the video contest is not that students learn to use catalogues and databases through producing videos but rather that they use the contest as a means of exploring some of the deeper information literacy concepts: evaluating sources, using information ethically and constructing original research ideas.

“Creating a video for a contest has the potential to be a constructivist learning activity.”

## VIDEO CONTESTS AS AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

Emphasizing the role of the student-videomaker in our contest correlates philosophically to the way current social media (“Web 2.0”) applications privilege user-generated content rather than the work of a backend programmer. If we choose to consider the video contest from a pedagogical point of view and through the discourses of education instead of through the perspectives of LIS practi-

tioner literature and social media studies, we see that it is possible to view the video contest as a unique assessment form that truly measures student understanding and application of information literacy outcomes.

In the education literature, assessment specialists such as Grant Wiggins and Richard Stiggins refer to **'authentic assessment'** or assessment

activities that are based in real-world tasks (<http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/res/litass/auth.html>). That video contest participants need to come to terms with defining information literacy and contextualizing it in a way that would make for an effective video can be in and of itself an information literacy task — realizing information needs, gathering resources and developing a cogent thesis.



Mont Royal in Fall

## SETTING UP THE CONTEST: THE CONCORDIA COMMUNITY AND INITIAL PLANNING

**Understanding our community.** Concordia University is an urban university located in Montréal, Canada. With a population of more than 44,000 part-time and full-time student, Concordia is a dynamic and growing institution. Its student body is very active and creative, and the university boasts strong fine arts and communication-related programs that include film production, film animation, design and computation arts, studio arts, theatre, communication studies and marketing. These two ingredi-

ents play an important part in ensuring that the video contest project succeeds.

**Contest Planning.** An initial planning phase comprised of preparing a short rationale document that included guidelines, rules, technological considerations and a preliminary budget. Once the document received administrative approval, we continued by formalizing the process.

**Timeline.** Approval was obtained and preliminary

groundwork took shape. The Spring and Summer 2008 terms will enable us to finalize contest documentation, including the rules, categories and evaluation criteria. We will also try to secure external sponsors to increase the prize money. Finally, a communication plan and promotional strategy will be devised.

The contest is expected to begin in Sept. 2008 and run until through the Winter 2009 term. Winners will be announced in April 2009.



Concordia University, Loyola Campus, Montreal, Quebec

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS/ DEVELOPING CONTEST GUIDELINES AND RULES

To make sure that the process of submitting videos is as easy as possible, we need to further investigate **technological requirements**. Specifically, this includes looking at how videos are uploaded and where they are stored, which is an aspect that needs to be verified with our Systems Office. Rules will outline the acceptable file formats. Ideally, we would like students to be able to submit videos online through our site and we also want to provide rating/voting capabilities for our community. We haven't decided yet if we will have a "public prize," but it is definitely something worth considering. Should the library

be unable to support these requirements, alternatives such as YouTube will be investigated.

Information literacy is the theme of the contest, but it will not be explicitly marketed as such. It will likely be communicated as **"how we interact with information."** We haven't determined the different categories should we decide to go this route. Team or individual submissions will be accepted (at least one member of a team must be a registered Concordia student). Upon submitting a video, it will be understood by participants that these will be used by the library for promo-

tional or instructional purposes.

We will respect freedom of expression but submissions cannot contain gratuitous violence, nudity or erotic imagery. Copyright must be respected. For instance, clearance for copyrighted material used in a video must be obtained. We will encourage the use of public domain and creative commons material. Privacy must also be respected. Permission will also be required to film in the library. This is a local policy and we may have "filming" hours when the library is closed to allow participants to use the library.

**"Information literacy is the theme of the contest, but ... it will likely be communicated as 'how we interact with information.'"**

## SELECTING A JURY

We anticipate a jury of five to seven members (2 librarians, 2 faculty members, 1 or 2 members from the community [alumni, professionals in the field], and 1 or 2 students). Consideration may be given to choosing jury members with specialty or interest in film studies, communication studies or literature as

well as information literacy professionals.

Meetings of the jury members will be infrequent with perhaps an initial gathering in the summer to talk about contest guidelines and the interpretation of evaluation criteria. Jury members will

work out how to evaluate videos with respect to the artfulness and production qualities of submissions, and how the technical and visual aspects of the videos work in thematically (and perhaps pedagogically) to information literacy concepts.



Vieux Montreal

## PROMOTION OF THE VIDEO CONTEST

This remains the most challenging part of preparing the contest. How do we encourage students to participate and to submit quality videos? In December 2007, the University held a "You @ Concordia" video contest that was not very successful. We want to avoid this by spending sufficient time and energy on promoting the contest. Potential strategies include traditional means such as student newspapers, posters, Web sites, student portal and stu-

dent associations. However, we are hoping to collaborate with key faculty members who will spread the word about the contest, but also perhaps include it as a requirement for the class. This could result in a large number of students participating that takes this contest seriously. It remains to be seen if such partnerships will be established.

Incentives will likely be the contest's greatest draw:

money, fame and portfolios. We are anticipating \$3000 in cash prizes to be handed out during a gala event or in collaboration with the School of Cinema's film festival. Participants will also be able to include their video in their portfolios, which, for many, is as important and significant as a curriculum vitae.



Montreal Night Cityscape

## REFERENCES & PHOTO CREDITS (PHOTOS THROUGH CREATIVE COMMONS)

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# WILU 2009



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