An Eye-Opening Role: Helping Students Develop Professional Skills through Digital Media Projects

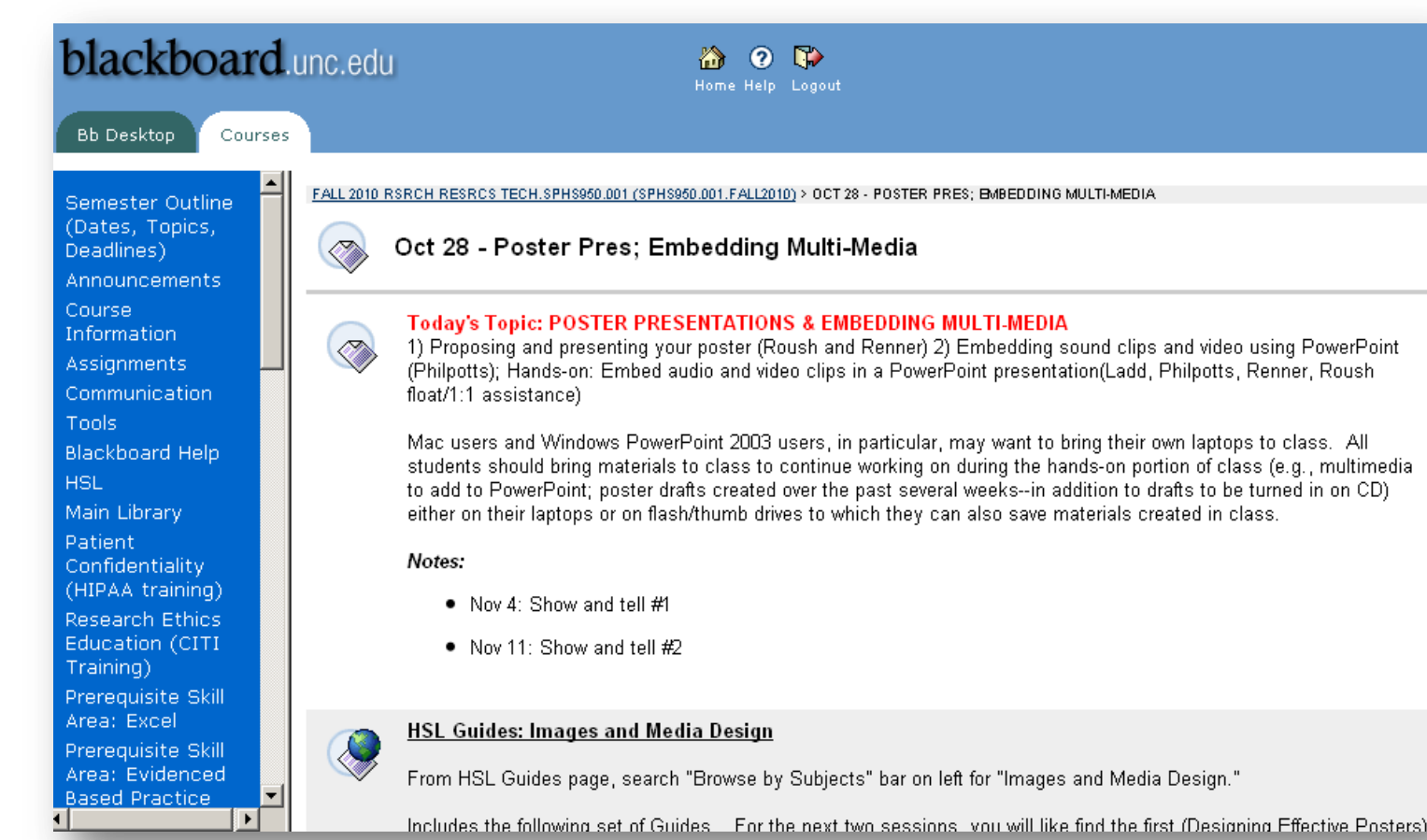Barbara Rochen Renner, PhD[1], Lisa Philpotts, RN, BSN[1,2] & Robert Ladd, MA[1]

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An Opportunity

- As digital media tools become widely available to students, library professionals can take a leadership role in helping students use these tools to learn more actively and to become scholars and leaders in their fields.
- This role addresses the need for instruction on media literacy[1] and information transfer.

Program Plan

- **The Pitch:** Course integrated digital media design and presentation skills classes & support services offered by Health Sciences Library (HSL) staff.
- **Objective:** Help students learn to use digital media tools to create posters, websites, audio, video, blogs to develop media literacy and professional communication skills.
- **Participants:** Graduate/Professional students in Occupational Science, Physical Therapy, Rehabilitation Counseling & Psychology, & Speech and Hearing Science programs.

Course lesson plans were developed with faculty input
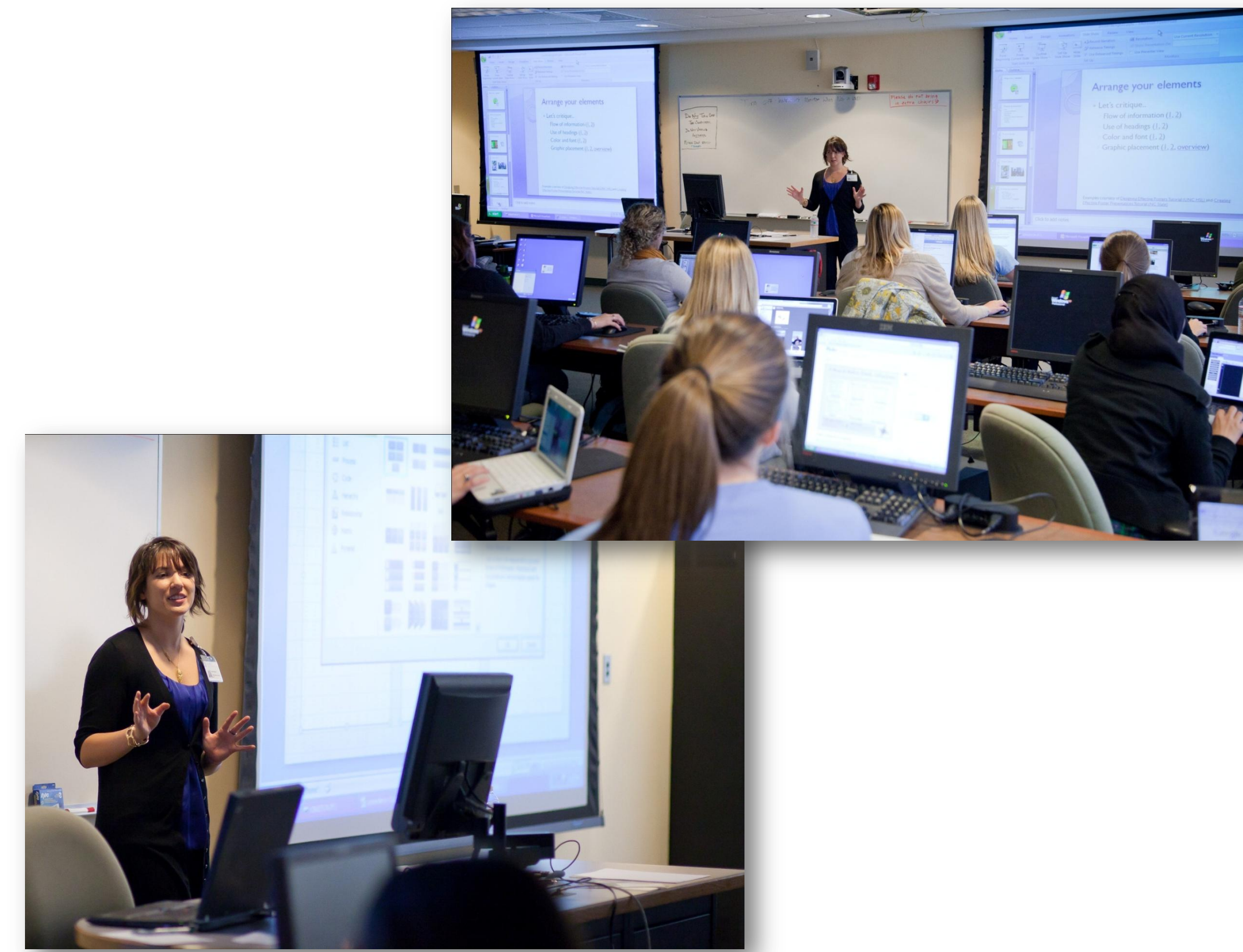
References
1) Thoman, E., & Jolls, T. (2004). Media literacy - A national priority for a changing world. *American Behavioral Scientist, 48*(1), 18-29.
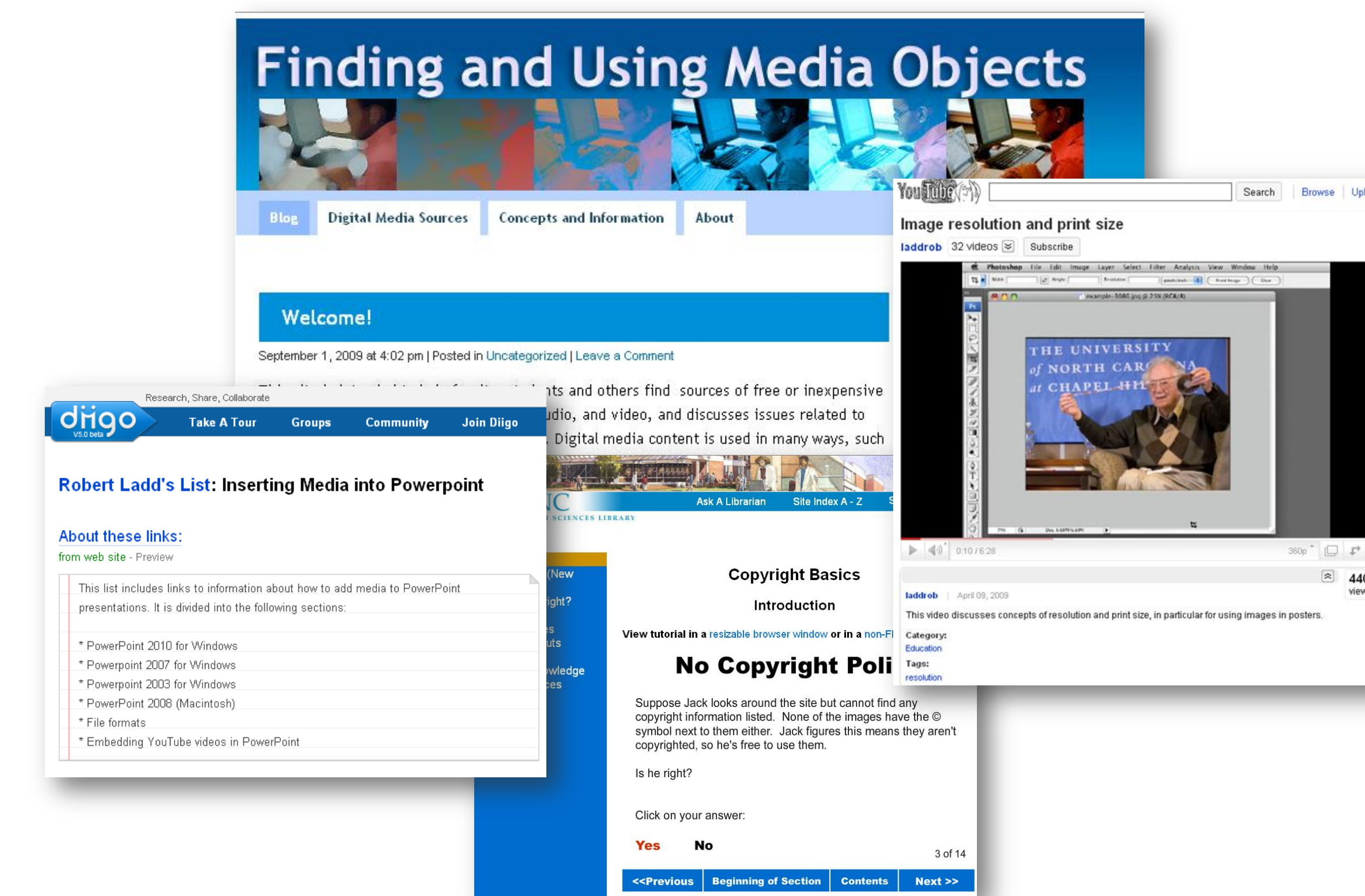
Program Steps

1 **Library instruction sessions**
Lecture, discussion, in-class hands on practice.

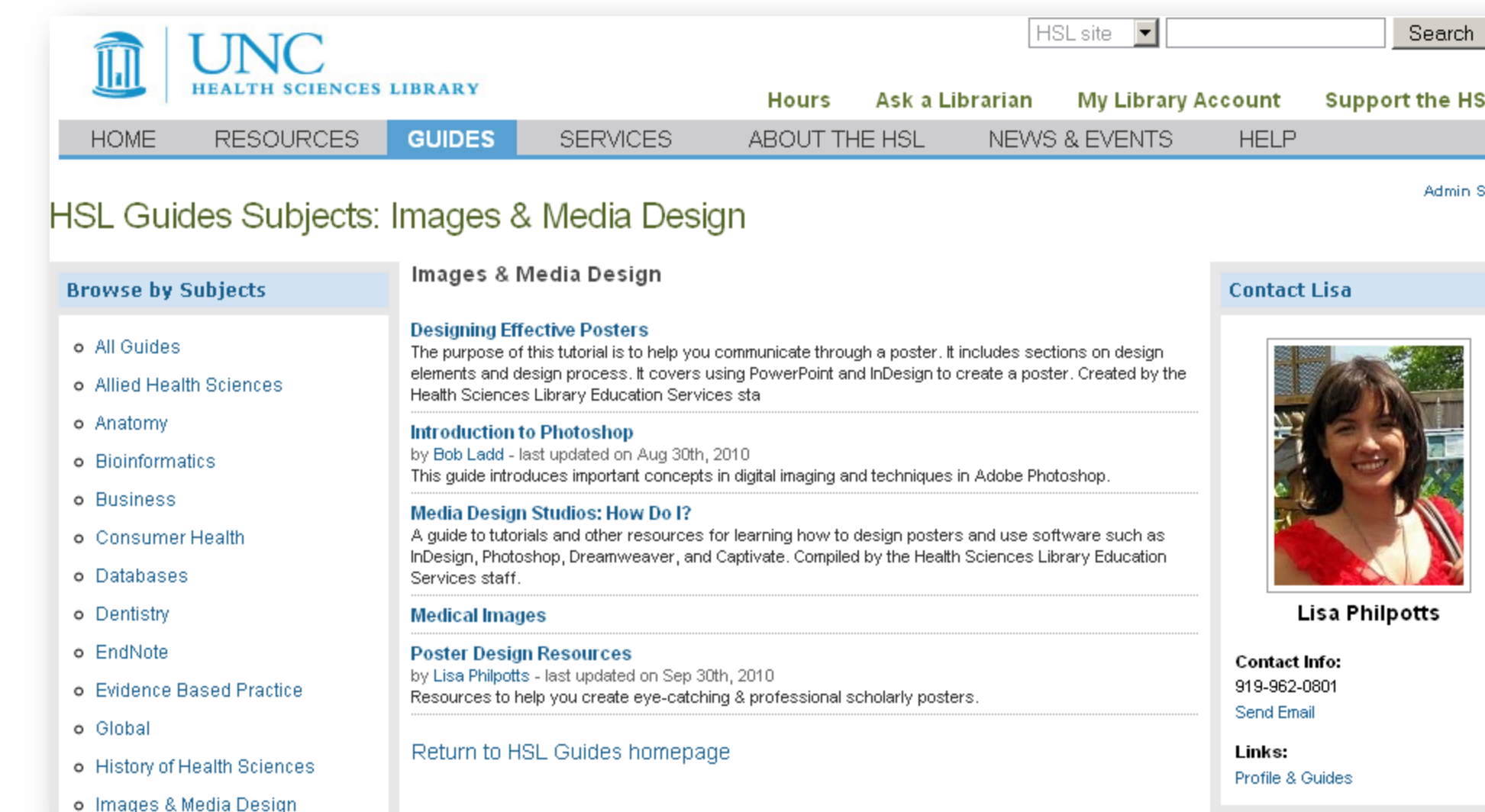**2** **Students continue work outside of class, using online materials created by library staff and...**

Library staff offer follow up one-on-one, small group, & e-mail consultations.

3 **Students present digital media projects** that:
- Document clinical, service, research experiences for reflection and sharing.
- Showcase work to colleagues, professionals, parents at Student Research Days and become formal presentations to colleagues at conferences.
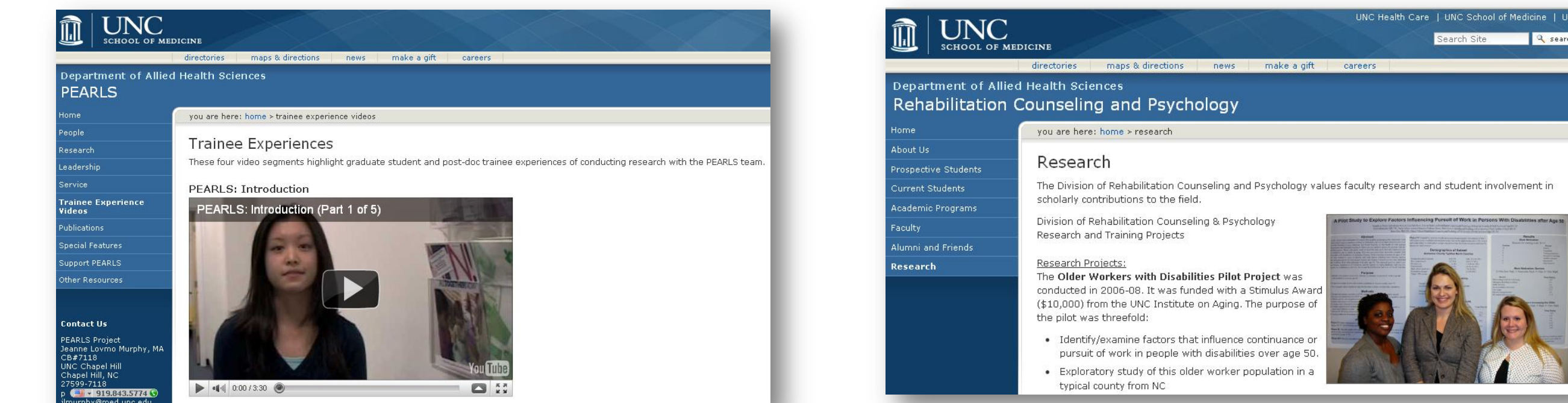
4 **Finally, students are encouraged to make use of HSL expertise & resources for future projects.**

- **Feedback gathered from students & faculty is incorporated into future teaching.**
- At student request, HSL-provided **resources popular with students** are **integrated into HSL Guides**, where they are accessible to all HSL website visitors.

Outcomes

- Following library instruction and presentations at a division, "Student Research Day," other divisions requested similar classes.
- HSL focus shifted from consults on basic poster production skills to follow-up review, project planning, software selection, extension to multimedia & Web 2.0.
- Department Chair/Associate Dean urged adoption of model to give all students real experience prior to graduation.
- At request of faculty, instruction extended to medical students.

Conclusions

- Digital media projects give students the confidence to embrace and use multimedia tools & skills throughout their training, and to look for novel ways to employ them.
- Library staff and resources play an integral role in the success of the digital media design and presentation skills classes.
- Success encouraged faculty to work with HSL liaison to integrate library instruction throughout their curricula.
- Library staff will continue to offer digital media design and presentation skills classes and support.

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