College of Education Dean's Office
Collaborative Community Engagement Grant Descriptive Report

Media for Youth Participatory Learning and Civic Engagement (MY PLACE):
An Instructional Design Collaboration with CivicLab

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Report of Project Activities

The College of Education Dean's Office Collaborative Community Engagement grant made possible the design and implementation of the Media for Youth Participatory Learning and Civic Engagement (MY PLACE) program, a four-week course for youth ages 12 to 18 that was held at CivicLab (civiclab.us) in the West Loop neighborhood of Chicago. Funding was used to purchase equipment, food and transportation for participants, and to rent the CivicLab space for class meetings. The design team consisted of Nathan Phillips (assistant professor in the UIC College of Education), Katie Headrick Taylor (postdoctoral research fellow in the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University), Benjamin Sugar (co-founder of CivicLab, a community organization focused on civic education in Chicago), Simeko Washington (doctoral student in Curriculum Studies at UIC), and Shawndra Allen (doctoral student in LLC at UIC). The five of us participated in all aspects of design, recruitment of participants, and implementation of the class.

We were able to recruit seven students from communities in and around Chicago to participate in the program. These youth ranged in age from 12 to 15. Youth participated in the MY PLACE course on four consecutive Saturdays, March 8-29, from 10am to 3pm each day, at CivicLab. The course concluded with an opportunity for MY PLACE youth to share their work and what they learned with their family members, neighbors, friends, and other attendees. We called this final showcase the MY PLACE Showcase Shazam!, and it took place on April 12.

The purpose of the course was to engage young people in learning how to tell and make public stories about places that are important to them using everyday and innovative digital technologies. A brief timeline/outline of course topics and activities follows:

March 8
- Getting to know each other through Google Earth satellite tours of our neighborhoods and schools and hand-drawn maps of our homes and neighborhoods
- Introduction of spatial storytelling with several examples of spatial stories (e.g., recorded live storytelling segment from This American Life, NPR's StoryCorps, youth-produced short documentary about a community issue)
- Tour of the Pilsen neighborhood including a visit to several businesses and museums
- Audio interviews with people in Pilsen
- Photographs of places of importance in Pilsen

March 15
- Creating photostories that integrate audio and visuals to tell spatial stories
- Examples of spatial storytelling (e.g., music videos, maps, news stories, audio narratives, interviews)
- Analysis of Common's "The Corner" as an example of multimedia spatial storytelling
- Conducting audio interviews with other participants and digitally editing interviews in GarageBand
- Learning technical aspects of how GPS satellites function
- GPS drawing as a method of "writing the city" (see, e.g., www.gpsdrawing.com)
- Creation of youth GPS drawings in the West Loop

March 22
- Debriefing GPS drawing as coming to know the city in new ways and "ground truthing" mapped representations of place
- Critical investigation of complex thematic maps of Chicago neighborhoods that display demographic changes over time
- Creating thematic maps to tell spatial stories about time, place, and layers of census data using Social Explorer
- Integrating thematic maps with audio recorded narratives to make spatial arguments in iMovie
- Touring the past and present historic Maxwell Street area of Chicago using GPS devices in a geocache activity

March 29
- Additional research into histories of the neighborhoods/parts of the city we visited during MY PLACE: Pilsen, West Loop, and Maxwell Street
- Discussion about civic engagement and the ways in which MY PLACE connected with civic action for participants
- Completion of spatial argument maps/narratives in iMovie
- Creation of a youth-chosen final project utilizing any of the technologies or methods of spatial storytelling introduced in the course to create a spatial story about a place of importance and interest to each young person

April 12 (Showcase Shazam!)
- Family members, friends, and others interested in MY PLACE attended a showcase where each youth individually shared artifacts and examples of the work created during the four weeks of the program and answered questions about what they learned from attendees

Evidence of Impact on Members in the Community Served

One intended impact of the program was to contribute to building resources and capacities among youth in underserved communities that support their engagements in their communities and their learning across contexts and with media and technologies. One measure of this impact is the MY PLACE participants' interactions with attendees at the Showcase Shazam!, where they were called on to individually show artifacts they had created with digital and geospatial tools and discuss what they learned (for photographs of these interactions, please see "Additional Documentation" below). Attendees were invited to submit "comment cards" to each of the MY PLACE youth after listening to them share their artifacts and discuss their learning and participation. Below are excerpts from these comment cards as evidence of impact on the MY PLACE participants' learning and engagement during the program:

- "Student expressed in-depth knowledge of minority citizenship/presence in U.S. between 1790 – 1900"
- "[Participant's] explanation of the use of GPS and what he got as a result of his program participation was insightful."
- "Good job telling about slavery population and current African American population to date"
- "Good job expressing how important your surroundings are to you. You focus on things that are of importance to you. The slave population in the country was interesting as well. Never be afraid to express knowledge you have."
- "Very knowledgeable of your surroundings. I liked the comparison of ten year development of the neighborhood from the vacant land to being developed for senior living."
- "I enjoyed [participant's] use of technology and his ability to demonstrate it."
- "Excellent job of chronicling the population of the Bronzeville neighborhood. Particularly impressed by student's explanation of population shift cause by CHA dismantle."
- "I really like the different maps in your video and the different phenomena that these show."
- "[Participant's] explanation of the African American migration from 1860 – 1870 as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation was insightful."
- "[Participant] was able to clearly articulate her project and what her map represented. I enjoyed her explanation of what she learned as a result of participating in the program."
- "You have a good knowledge base about your area. Being able to research Lincolnshire's education to show where there is more and less concentration was great."
- "Nice research and display of unemployment. Great video in all."
- "[Participant's] explanation of his map was very good. He was able to explain what was represented on the map. I enjoyed his video presentation.

A second intended impact of the program is the continued development of instructional contexts that support connected learning, literacies, and civic engagement with young people. The grant made possible the formulation of our design team, which is committed to continuing to develop the program and iterating elements of it in multiple instructional settings in and out of schools. For example, this summer we intend to redesign and re-

implement MY PLACE in different community organizations as part of their summer programming. We have already made contacts with programs and have partners who are eager to work with us in including elements of MY PLACE in ongoing youth programming. As we work as a team to develop tools, activities, and contexts that support young people in engaging in their communities through telling spatial stories and becoming critically involved in interpreting and contributing to community conversations about issues of importance, we believe we can continue to impact youth and support them in effecting change in places that are important to them in and around Chicago.

Press-Ready Statement
The College of Education Dean's Office Collaborative Community Engagement grant supported the design and implementation of the Media for Youth Participatory Learning and Civic Engagement (MY PLACE) program, a four-week course for young people ages 12 to 18 that was held at CivicLab (civiclab.us), a civic-education-focused community organization in the West Loop neighborhood. MY PLACE was designed and implemented by faculty and graduate students at UIC and Northwestern in collaboration with the co-founder of CivicLab.

MY PLACE participants from in and around Chicago investigated stories in the city and learned how to use everyday digital tools in conjunction with geospatial technologies to tell stories about places that mattered to them. For example, participants toured the Pilsen neighborhood and collected audio interviews and photographs to create photostories. Participants also used GPS technologies to visit and research the historic Maxwell Street area of Chicago. After learning how to create spatial stories with multimedia and digital tools, young people in the MY PLACE program created a project of choice utilizing technologies learned in the program. The program concluded with a celebration during which each of the MY PLACE youth shared their projects and what they learned with visitors at a public showcase of their work.

Additional Documentation
- CivicLab Flickr Photo Stream:
  https://tinyurl.com/myplace2014
  Curated collection of photos from the MY PLACE project stored on the CivicLab Flickr page and available to the public.

- Photos from the MY PLACE Showcase Shazam!
  Pages 5-9 (below) include photos of MY PLACE participants during the MY PLACE Showcase Shazam! *The MY PLACE Showcase Shazam! took place on April 12 at CivicLab. Participants' parents, grandparents, other family members, friends, teachers, and anyone else interested in MY PLACE were invited to CivicLab to see each participant share her or his projects created during the program and to discuss what participants learned. Below are photographs from this event.*

Photos from the MY PLACE Showcase Shazam! (April 12, 2014)