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Community Informatics for Youth:
Using the Extension Network to Recruit Future LIS Professionals (YCI)

Early in its evolution, the “Community Informatics for Youth: Using the Extension Network to Recruit Future LIS Professionals” project developed a shorter name, particularly for use in discussions with community partners. That was “Youth Community Informatics” or “YCI.” This was easier to say than the full, official title. Moreover, it emphasized that we were not simply providing services to youth, but helping youth to become active creators of community informatics. In this document we will most often use that shorter name or the abbreviation.

PARTNERS

YCI works with local partners, by which we mean schools, libraries, community centers, and other groups within Illinois, as well as state and national organizations. We list here those with the most extensive involvement.

State partners

- 4-H Extension network of Illinois

Community partners

- Booker T. Washington Elementary School, Urbana, IL
- Dialogue in Methods of Education (DIME)
- Champaign County Juvenile Detention Center
- Iroquois West Middle School, Onarga, IL
- Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Community, Joliet, IL
- Peer Ambassadors, Champaign, IL
- Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School, Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC), and Paseo Boricua, Chicago
- Rantoul High School, Rantoul, IL
- Teen Tech Team, East St. Louis, IL
- TAP In Leadership Academy, Champaign
- Urbana Free Library
- Urbana Middle School
- Virginia High School, Virginia, IL

OVERVIEW

Together with 4-H Extension services, the University of Illinois’s Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) has developed partnerships with youth leaders within and outside educational settings across the state of Illinois. Through the Youth Community Informatics (YCI) program, youth in underserved communities learned to use information and communication technologies to investigate and address community issues. The process introduced youth to the relevance of library and information science by inviting them to become active creators and sustainers
of their own communities. Participants created information products ranging from community asset maps to library collections to digital videos to self-published books. Over 50 different LIS youth engagement learning modules were developed through these partnerships. YCI activities have fostered new community–university collaborations as well as changes to the GSLIS curriculum expected to endure past the life of the project.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Development of learning modules.

One of the originally stated objectives for the YCI project was to develop and field test 12 different learning modules. From the beginning, modules were conceived as “inquiry units,” which allowed for a broad range of topics to be similarly structured based on the concept of the Inquiry Cycle¹: Ask; Investigate; Create; Discuss; Reflect (see Figure 1).

The YCI modules we initially proposed were primarily skills-based, focusing on teaching technology fundamentals such as how to assemble a desktop computer or set up a local area network. Several more modules concentrated on digital literacy skills, including podcasting, video editing, and digital mapping. More than 30 such modules were created by YCI graduate assistants in collaboration with community partners. These modules helped youth in Paseo Boricua, East St. Louis, Cass County, Iroquois County, and Champaign County to acquire new technical skills necessary to implement their community projects.

However, field testing these modules quickly demonstrated that a variety of approaches were needed to address specific community needs, resulting in the creation of many more modules. These are discussed below (see “Meeting the objectives”).

Community informatics projects.

At any given time YCI has worked with a variety of sites, including 4-H clubs, after-school programs, Boys & Girls Clubs, and community centers. We also collaborate with existing community projects. Our work in communities can be described according to three levels of connection and commitment, which we have been referring to as YCI sites, partner sites, and network sites. Although it is tempting to label these in hierarchical terms, it is perhaps more accurate to describe the relationship among these levels as “rhizomatic.” In particular, it is often the case that partner sites grow into YCI sites, or that heavily committed YCI site collaborators take off in a direction of their own, seeking different types of support from university partners than at other stages of the relationship. Below, we highlight just some of our principal collaborations in order to reflect the nature and range of the projects.

Paseo Boricua (2007–present). In collaboration with youth leaders in Chicago’s Paseo Boricua community, YCI contributed to several local initiatives. As one example, YCI participated in the development of the multimedia curriculum of the Barrio Arts, Culture, and Communication Academy (BACCA), an after-school program that cultivates theater, newspaper, radio, photography, and film/TV production skills through community-based civic engagement projects. The collaboration included an anti-underage drinking campaign, “This Is the Real Me,” for which BACCA youth produced and disseminated culturally relevant community health information such as radio PSAs, photos, newspaper articles, and a book self-published through Blurb.com (see: [http://goo.gl/iFCYL](http://goo.gl/iFCYL)).

E2Y (Engaging and Empowering Youth) Community Asset Mapping Project (2009–2010). Supported by YCI graduate assistants and community partners, five African American teens from north Champaign canvassed their neighborhoods to identify job opportunities, summer activities, teen-friendly spaces, and informal and formal networks of support for teens. Participants interviewed business owners, community leaders, and others, then edited the digital video footage and created an interactive asset map using Google Maps (see: [http://goo.gl/KsCmH](http://goo.gl/KsCmH)). E2Y youth earned money for their participation, including for their presentations at two conferences.

Extending Library Services to Empower Youth (ELSEY) (2009–present). ELSEY began when the Peer Ambassadors, a local group of African American and Latino/a youth involved in mentoring and providing community services in Champaign-Urbana, recognized a need for literacy and library services at the Champaign County Juvenile Detention Center. The Peer Ambassadors, who were already YCI partners, initially introduced the idea to YCI. The collaboration works to build and maintain a library that contains culturally relevant materials and programming reflective of the experiences and interests of youth in the juvenile detention center. Other allies include the Urbana Free Library, Champaign Public Library, and Books2Prisoners (see [http://elseyjdc.wordpress.com](http://elseyjdc.wordpress.com)).
Iroquois West Middle School (2008–2009). YCI and 4-H Extension collaborated with this rural Illinois middle school to develop several community mapping projects. Through periodic site visits, YCI provided technological support and training (see: http://wp.iwest.k12.il.us/maps/).

Peer Ambassadors (2008–present). YCI’s relationship with PAs has grown over the years from an instructional role into a partnership. In recent years, GSLIS students Joe Coyle and Jeannie Austin have worked extensively with the PAs to build their information literacy and media literacy skills. They have been involved in creating videos about services in local libraries in order to incorporate these videos into their programming in the juvenile detention center. PAs have researched information on libraries, created storyboards and scripts, and worked with GSLIS students to create and edit footage.

Rantoul (2008–2009). The town of Rantoul, Illinois, became economically depressed following the closing of the Chanute Air Force Base in the early 1990s. Working in Rantoul High School with a group of juniors called Youth Democracy, YCI provided Rantoul youth with the tools to investigate, document, and disseminate information about the impact of poverty on their community (see http://youtu.be/gzq01Qe_UPc).

TAP In (2010–present). TAP In Leadership Academy provides social and academic support to traditionally underserved youth with the goal of making university life more accessible. In summer 2010, three teenage girls who had previously participated in the YCI asset-mapping project (EZY) served as mentors for young scholars enrolled in TAP In’s summer enrichment program and blogged about their experiences. The collaboration continued over the school year, with YCI graduate assistant Chaebong Nam arranging for GSLIS to open its computer labs once a week to around fifteen young TAP In scholars. YCI GAs Chaebong Nam and Shameem Rakha worked with TAP In instructors to introduce youth to advanced ICTs, with a focus on web research skills and digital storytelling. In spring 2011, GSLIS students custom-designed and built a technology center for TAP In so that it could introduce more ICT-supported inquiries into its enrichment program, including the YCI curriculum (see http://www.tapinacademy.org/apps/photos/).

Urbana-Champaign + Joliet After-School Programs (2007–2008). Approximately 70 middle school students, participating in several different programs, conducted Internet research and used multimedia tools (e.g., podcasting) to investigate youth-identified research topics. Topics included: the U.S.-led war on Iraq, obesity, children in Africa, the history of the local Mexican-American community, and survival tips for immigrant students. Some Urbana youth also took part in special library programming that explored multicultural literature. These activities formed the basis for several YCI learning modules.

Virginia High School (2009–2010). YCI provided training and support to help two teachers develop a GIS/GPS technologies course at a rural Illinois high school that is challenged by population loss, hardships in the agricultural sector, and a lack of local opportunities. In its inaugural year, eight male students registered for the course. Projects have included geocaching, a cemetery-mapping project, an oral history project, explorations of careers requiring GIS technology skills, and investigations of current community challenges through the analysis of publicly accessible GIS data (e.g., U.S. census data and local surveys).
Teen Tech Team (2007–2009). Teen Tech Team is a program based in East St. Louis that was collaboratively developed in 2006 through a partnership between GSLIS and the St. Louis-based non-profit Computer Village. The initial focus was to train teens in computer and networking skills along with social entrepreneurship. Teen Tech Team was invited to the first YCI summer workshop and following that became a partner site, expanding its programming to include a range of inquiry-based computer activities that included GIS mapping and video production to increase their capacity to tell stories about their community. During summer 2009 GSLIS students custom-designed and -built a new computer lab funded in part through YCI that enhanced Teen Tech video production within their facility.

Mary E. Brown Center (2010-present). The Mary E. Brown Center has served as a community center supporting academic, sports, and technology activities since the 1960's. Since 2010 YCI has engaged with the program staff to increase inquiry-based activities. These include a very successful collaboration between GSLIS and architecture students and center staff to redesign the computer lab space, funded in large part through YCI, that has led to greater collaboration between youth, and between youth and staff during summer 2010; a series of workshops on the value of digital storytelling for community building given to community leaders January 2011; and a successful summer 2011 program led by GSLIS students to introduce inquiry-based citizen journalism, blogging, and video production to summer youth programs by training camp counselors and center staff (see http://www.metroeastdigital.org/youth/).

Computer technology and information access.

The “Citizen Professional Toolkit”. Although YCI’s initial proposal had included a plan to help community partners build their own computer technology centers, over the course of the project a new concept evolved out of the fact that different community partners had vastly different needs.

The toolkit served as a starting point for exploring how we could effectively equip community organizations with a self-contained package of technology to support their youth, who were engaging in community informatics activities in the field. The goal was to create a portable kit that includes many of the common tools used by professionals such as journalists, planners, librarians, and scientists. The items in the kit provide the tools to do photographic, audio, video, and GPS-related investigations. Along with these components, the kit also includes an ultra-mobile laptop and video capture card to create multimedia productions. Key principles were that the kit should be:

- relatively easy to begin using at a basic level;
- portable, in order to encourage use in the field;
- approximately the quality of professional units, but affordable for community organizations.

The kit as a unit is documented at: http://yci.illinois.edu/yci/?page_id=820. A total of eight toolkits were purchased for use by researchers working with community partners. Only three complete kits were purchased on behalf of community partners themselves, as most sites preferred to use the toolkit as a starting point for a customized selection of individual items to meet their multimedia creation needs.

4-H went on to develop its own version of the kit for use in youth video projects across the state. As part
of its Video SPIN Club initiative, community groups can apply to receive, on loan, a 4-H Tech Kit that includes: 2 iFlip video cameras, 1 miniDVD camcorder with tripod, a directional handheld microphone, a wireless lavalier microphone, and a laptop installed with video and sound editing software.

**Campus–community engagement.**

Over its four years, YCI as a project and individual YCI staff engaged with community groups in too many ways to list completely here. We highlight some of the more significant activities:

*Community as Intellectual Space (2007–present).* Since its inception, YCI representatives have played a central role in the Puerto Rican Cultural Center’s annual Community as Intellectual Space symposium. Focusing on a different theme each year, the symposium brought together Paseo Boricua leaders, community partners, artists, educators, librarians, activists, students, and local residents to address social justice issues and support community-building efforts. YCI has hosted community informatics workshops and contributed actively to strategy discussions. The symposium is now funded and organized by the Puerto Rican Cultural Center. In 2011, its focus was on high school students.

*Dialogue in Methods of Education [DIME] workshops.* DIME has been meeting twice a year since 1980. Members include teachers at all levels, museum and library educators, researchers, students, community members, and others who gather to discuss various issues related to teaching, learning, and community inquiry. The dialogues touch on many topics, including hands-on learning, problem solving, collaborative learning, innovations in teaching, making sense of student work, community funds of knowledge, assessment, communication with parents, new technologies, and multicultural learning.

In the spring of 2009, PI Bertram C. Bruce and YCI graduate assistants conducted two separate GPS workshops at DIME meetings in Virginia, IL. The first introduced a group of Cass County educators and 4-H organizers to community mapping activities. In the second, after a morning of instruction in the new technologies, high school students from Virginia and Beardstown along with community members of all ages participated in a hands-on mapping activity involving GPS devices and digital video. In the fall, Virginia High School students led adult DIME participants in a GIS workshop that they had designed. In 2010, the youth of the E2Y project presented their community asset-mapping project to around 30 DIME participants.

*iConference (Feb. 3, 2010).* Around 25 conference attendees hailing from LIS programs across North America and Europe participated in a full-day workshop on youth community informatics. Youth from E2Y and Virginia High School worked together to guide adult participants in a group GIS mapping activity. They also presented talks about their work and responded to audience questions. In addition, workshop attendees learned about portable technologies to support YCI projects in the field; received copies of the YCI curriculum; had the opportunity to share their own work; and discussed the historical, pedagogical, and policy implications of the work. The workshop led directly to invitations to share YCI’s work at other events.

*YCI Summer Forums (2008 & 2009).* For a weekend each summer, around 30 youth and adults from several communities who collaborate with YCI converged on the University of Illinois campus to
participate in the YCI Summer Youth Forum. In the first year, as a part of the activity, “Exploring Information Spaces,” youth investigated different information spaces around campus—everything from bus stops to the Illini Student Union. Teens recorded and edited digital video footage, documenting and reflecting on the myriad ways information is organized and disseminated in our daily lives. In 2009, YCI and 4-H cohosted “Music as the Message” on the university campus. Participating teens investigated political and socially charged songs such as Marvin Gaye’s “Inner-City Blues” and Catpower’s “Names.” They researched the issues addressed in these protest songs, then created multiple forms of media, such as zines, videos, and slideshows to share what they learned and felt about these issues (see: http://youtu.be/XU62fXi2n3A).

YCI AUDIENCE

• Youth in underserved urban and rural communities throughout Illinois, including Rantoul, Virginia, Paseo Boricua (Chicago), Champaign, East St. Louis, Iroquois County
• Adult partners in these communities
• University of Illinois students
• Youth librarians and educators
• Colleagues in the U.S. and abroad exploring similar youth engagement projects

ANALYSIS

Original goals and objectives.

Context. It’s important to set the accomplishments of the Community Informatics for Youth project within its context. This is because it benefitted from other ongoing projects and activities and some of its most important contributions were to those other efforts.

The grant was awarded at the same time as a companion grant from IMLS, “Community Informatics Corps: the Next Generation” (RE-05-07-0015-07), also known as “CIC.” The grants were housed in the same building and coordinated by the Community Informatics Initiative (CII). There were some common themes—a focus on place-based communities, the use of new digital technologies, and an emphasis on underserved populations. And there was some overlap in staffing.

However, the grants differed in focus and objectives. CIC focused on capacity building within GSLIS and the LIS community. Its objectives included to:

1) Further develop the master’s curriculum, improving its design and expanding its content;
2) Attract and support students, especially those from underserved communities;
3) Support faculty development in CI;
4) Strengthen communication and capacity-building at the intersection of university and community; and
5) Implement mechanisms for collaborative program development with other LIS programs.
Students and faculty working with CIC engaged in building technology centers, conducting community-based projects, participating in workshops, and extending campus-community engagement. However, these activities served to make the GSLIS CI curriculum and program more connected to community life, and were not done primarily as community outreach. In that sense, CIC looked inward to the LIS profession.

Meanwhile, YCI had objectives that looked outward to community groups, and by design, to those not already in the LIS field. These included inviting youth across the state to:

1) Participate in learning modules on a range of LIS topics, using both face-to-face and technology-mediated distance mechanisms;

2) Work on community informatics projects in collaboration with local community partners, local libraries, graduate LIS students, and undergraduates from diverse fields;

3) Participate in campus events to experience a wide variety of LIS careers; and

4) Participate in the development of computer technology and information access centers in their home communities.

We projected that outcomes would include a 12-module, field-tested LIS curriculum targeting diverse youth audiences, to be made available through the web for use in formal and informal learning environments. In addition, university students involved with the project were expected to develop their understanding of how LIS professionals can play a more significant role in underserved communities.

We found that the curriculum and program development of the companion grant (CIC) benefitted from the on-the-ground community work of YCI. Similarly, the academic aspects of CIC were very helpful for YCI activities. In many cases, a participant’s activities might fit both projects. For example, a graduate student working towards the Community Informatics master’s-level specialization might do a course project based at a YCI partner site.

Meeting the objectives.

Objective 1 – Accomplishments. Over the course of the project we far surpassed our goal of developing and field testing 12 learning modules. In fact, we developed and used over 50 learning modules, also known as inquiry units [see Appendix III].

As we worked with community partners, we found that different curricular models were needed in order to accommodate very different situations and learners. For example, a series of skills-based units was initially developed to support the establishment of community technology centers. A second phase of inquiry unit development occurred, with new units concentrating more on the community activity itself (e.g., oral history or community journalism), as opposed to the specific technologies employed. This second phase became the core of the Community as Curriculum activity guide (http://yci.illinois.edu/yci/?page_id=678), which is divided into two sections: “Youth as Social Inquirer,” and “Youth as Social Activist.” The first 10 units are exploratory and guide youth in different ways to

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investigate community issues such as cultural identity, poverty, racial segregation, or food security. Another 10 units support youth in creating information products that address the issues they have investigated. The curriculum includes activity guidelines as well as “blue box examples,” which are brief case studies that describe how the inquiry units have been used in various YCI projects.

*Community as Curriculum* drew from 4-H work and has in turn contributed to on-going 4-H activities, such as the annual 4-H Film Festival and Map Gallery at the Illinois State Fair. This year, the event expects to involve over 100 youth from across the state. Further, University of Illinois Extension 4-H has recently hired 11 new 4-H educators to work with metro youth audiences across the state. According to Extension collaborator Lisa Bouillon Diaz, the YCI curriculum is expected to be a valuable resource for this team as they establish new programs in partnership with community organizations.

The document is publicly available on the YCI website (http://www.yci.illinois.edu). Previous drafts of the *Community as Curriculum* guide have been distributed widely through the national 2010 CYFAR (Children, Youth and Families at Risk) conference and the 2010 iSchools conference. It has also been promoted directly to the Champaign schools for use with their enrichment programs as well as to the Boys and Girls Club of Champaign-Urbana. In summer 2011, TAP In Leadership Academy began using the curriculum for its enrichment programs. YCI graduate assistant Chaebong Nam, who previously oversaw the E2Y project, led video storytelling workshops for about 15 teens. A final assessment of TAP In’s experiences with the curriculum is still pending.

Other inquiry units exist with the community partners. Extensive, year-long curriculum units were developed by Virginia High School and Pedro Albizu Campos High School (PACHS) in Chicago. For example, a geocaching inquiry activity was developed by Virginia High School teachers Jeff Bennett and Robin Fisher for their GIS course, based on several YCI workshops, which occurred in 2009. It won a “Gold Seal Lesson of the Month” award, and is accessible to registered teachers through the Successful Practices website, at http://www.successfulpractices.org/spn/article/cat/Gold-Seal-Lessons. We have included this lesson in Appendix III of this report.

Another set of units exists in the form of the E2Y (Engaging and Empowering Youth) Community Asset Mapping Project workbook materials. These materials supported a year-long project in which youth and adult community members sought to identify opportunities and resources in the community for youth. These are included in Appendix III.

Finally, a curriculum with 11 activities identified (7 of which have thus far been written), known as “Collaboratively Mapping the Community Space with Online Geospatial Tools” was conceived and used in several settings. The learning objectives of this set include to: gain a basic conception of geographic information systems (GIS) and online mapping; learn to use common online geo-tools such as Google Map, OpenStreetMap, and GPS; develop an appreciation for the value of mapping; and to develop spatially aware citizenship. They are included in Appendix III.

These various units, and sets of units, reflect the different settings and diverse individual needs that one inevitably encounters in community-based work.
Objective 1 – Lessons learned. Developing and field testing inquiry units in collaboration with community partners brought home the necessity for flexibility, and a recognition that the priorities of partner communities did not always align with YCI’s vision as originally conceived.

Although we initially intended to address community inquiry by focusing on youth’s digital literacy skills, we came to realize that by foregrounding technological competence, deeper intellectual and social learning was being sacrificed. This is what led to a more holistic view of the YCI curriculum, eventually leading to the development of the Community as Curriculum activity guide.

Objective 2 – Accomplishments. We proposed working with five sites as our second objective. In the end, we had varying levels of involvement with about 20 sites, including much closer collaboration than we had originally envisioned with about 10 of these.

Sally Carter is an adult leader with one of the YCI community partners (TAP In Leadership Academy). Her project works with mostly minority youth in a semi-urban setting (see the “Community informatics projects” section above). This past year, GSLIS partnered with Ms. Carter to:

- teach students digital photography and photo editing;
- create a curriculum for their summer program (digital photography and Community as Curriculum);
- create a poster for a public engagement forum, which led to other UI connections;
- obtain funding to equip a new computer lab for their site with help of Prof. Martin Wolske’s Introduction to Network Systems class (this became one of their major projects for the Spring 2011 semester);
- provide summer employment for TAP In’s three teen mentors (the E2Y girls);
- write a chapter for our YCI book (in progress) on the challenges of university-community partnerships;
- lead digital video and community mapping projects (summer 2011).

In December 2010, Carter wrote to the YCI group mailing list to say:

On behalf of TAP In scholars and families, a very warm “thank you” to everyone who has in any way supported our mission. Because of you, community students are more comfortable on campus and can see themselves as college students. I am thrilled to report that 100% of our scholars’ grades improved this semester! You have introduced them to community informatics, community inquiry, photo editing, library research, and many other skills that are not learned in a regular school setting. This year, we plan to continue our work with GSLIS as well as other University departments to ensure we provide quality, forward thinking services to kids who express an ability and desire for higher learning.

In July 2011, TAP In presented GSLIS with the first annual Campus Partnership award. In 2008, our Community Informatics program was awarded the “most valuable community partner” award at the Pedro Albizu Campos High School graduation ceremony in Chicago (Paseo Boricua), where YCI has been especially active and several CI students held assistantships.
Similar feedback has come from a diverse array of partners. For example, Jeff Bennett is a teacher at Virginia High School. His course involves high school youth in community informatics throughout the school year. According to Bennett:

*I know that the two times that our students have presented [their work]—at the DIME meeting in October, with the U of I grad students and professors, and at the iConference—that really made a big change in the kids, confidence-wise. What’s really been neat is that two of the students are students with special needs. And I’ve seen their confidence really grow this year, and I think a large part of that is through this contact with professors and grad students at the U of I.*

Moreover, we connected community partners with one another, and with other university departments. For example, E2Y youth presented at conferences with youth from Virginia High School. TAP In scholars have met with Paseo youth in both Champaign and Chicago, and we helped connect Peer Ambassadors with additional community partners to assist with their Juvenile Detention Center library project. TAP In also now has active relationships with several university departments including GSLIS, the Micro and Nanotechnology Laboratory, MSTE (Office for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education), College of Business, College of Education, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, International Studies, Activities and Recreation Center, WILL AM-FM-TV, and the Pollinatarium. YCI’s partnership with Sally Carter initially helped her to navigate the complex university infrastructure and establish several of these connections. She has gone on to cement many more.

Along with two practicum students, GSLIS YCI affiliates Joe Coyle and Jeanie Austin have been staffing the Juvenile Detention Center library since February of 2011. Austin reports:

*In that time, we have interacted with over 50 youth to provide library services, build information literacy skills, and maintain the library. We hear from the youth that many of them do not read books when they are not in the center, and staff and volunteers have informed us that they sometimes have to ask youth to stop reading and participate in programs. Youth make frequent requests for materials and engage in one-on-one conversations with library staff about what they are reading and what they would like to read. We are currently working with the [Peer Ambassadors] to create programming that links youth in the center to community libraries, and will be conducting book discussion groups in the center over the course of the summer.*

One of the highlights of several collaborations has been the opportunity for youth to interact with others outside their community who came from diverse backgrounds. The eight Virginia High School students, for example, come from a school in which 99.1% of students are categorized as white. Their teacher, Jeff Bennett, reports that an important part of the program for his students has been the opportunity to engage in activities with African American youth from Champaign, with older adults through the various DIME workshops, and with university partners who hailed from countries as diverse as Nepal, South Korea, and Japan.

The youth of Virginia HS do not appear to be alone in benefitting from the multicultural make-up of the Youth Community Informatics group. Nama Budhathoki, a recently-graduated PhD candidate in Urban

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and Regional Planning, describes one of his experiences in field notes from the Rantoul site, where he conducted community journalism workshops along with fellow GA Moustafa Ayad:

At one point [Moustafa] said to students: “You will think about what, who, how, when, and where.” I took the GPS receiver out of my pocket and showed them and asked: “When Moustafa said ‘what, who, how, when, and where,’ how are you going to answer the ‘where’ part?” I said: “‘Now I am here with you in Rantoul. If I am to tell my family in Nepal about where I have been this Wednesday morning, I have a big challenge. They do not know Rantoul; they do not know Champaign. But they know Chicago. So if I could use this GPS (showing the device to them) to record the position of this building and send them a map showing both Rantoul and Chicago, they will get a much better sense.‘” Students then became interested in Nepal, the Himalayas and the weather out there. We spent the next few minutes talking about Nepal ... Showing them how to greet others in the Nepali language, I said: “You say ‘Namaste’ to say good morning in Nepali. ‘Students then imitated me and said “Namaste.”

Objective 2 – Lessons learned.

The dual objectives of teaching new technology skills while at the same time helping youth to reflect on complex community issues is extremely challenging in practice, particularly given the limited human resources at our disposal. Graduate student Chaebong Nam, who managed the E2Y project, wrote the following reflections on lessons learned:

First, this E2Y project foregrounded active youth participation but in the end was driven by adult university-community partners. Adult partners trained youth, did the canvassing with them, set up the interview schedules, escorted youth to their interviews, supervised the lab sessions, guided the creation of a Google map and a webpage, and helped youth prepare for their public presentation. In a sense, there was not much room for youth to participate in making decisions in this project. Yet, as time went by, youth could figure out the big picture of this project and gave many good suggestions for improvements related to canvassing, lab sessions, and a contract for their payment. This critique then helped adult university-community partners to reflect on this project from the youths’ perspective. In my opinion, future projects should take the issues of youth ownership in decision-making more into consideration to obtain more genuine youth perspectives on community issues.

Second, in open lab sessions, youth oftentimes rushed to finish to-do lists but did not have sufficient time for reflection. We wanted youth to equally develop both good technology skills and a better understanding of their community issues, not just “exercise” technical skills. Also, there were individual differences among the five youth in terms of level of technology skills, issues of interest, dispositions, learning capacities, etc.; some were quicker to learn than others and they all needed different levels of help and support. At the beginning, it was tough for me to keep track of their jobs, which were all in different stages, and let them reflect about what they newly learned, what are the most interesting issues, and why. I hope that future projects would think about how to help youth reflect more on the meanings and values of their activities in an in-depth way, while respecting those individual differences and at the same time letting them support each other as one group.

Although we wanted to establish meaningful and productive collaborations with partners outside of Champaign-Urbana, the physical distance factor posed challenges for both the graduate assistants and our partners, limiting the number of university partners who could work regularly on-site. This was further complicated by university insurance policies regarding transportation. It was sometimes necessary to recruit parents or other adult community partners to drive youth to field sites, even though this was not always an efficient option.
In one report, former graduate assistant and project manager Chris Ritzo wrote:

Being in a community at some distance from Urbana-Champaign (3 hours), we needed more active coordination and communication with Teen Tech, and had to adjust our communication preferences (phone/email; in-person/virtual) to match the preferences of our community partner. Simply relying on email proved inefficient and telephone calls were much more effective.

Graduate student Victor Benitez acknowledged the distance factor in his Practice Profile of the Humboldt Park asset-mapping project, for which he served as project coordinator:

Greater collaboration could have been made between the Paseo Boricua project and the rest of the YCI projects and faculty; the following might account for the weaker partnership: location of project, language and cultural differences, and only one “full-time” YCI student permanently onsite.

Such cultural differences were observed more than once, and served to heighten our awareness regarding the need to respect the fact that community goals may not always align with those of university stakeholders. In his field notes from 2009, Chris Ritzo reflected on lessons learned in this regard:

The experience with the ESL [East St. Louis] site has led to some significant findings and lessons learned. ... Developing a method for initial assessment of partner program might be warranted when exploring future partnerships. For example, in contrast to the independent programs in Paseo Boricua where our GAs have been able to connect with an existing, sustainable program, the Teen Tech program in East Saint Louis has developed from long-standing partnerships with Prairienet leadership, and as such has been more dependent on outside university assistance. ... This experience and the growing list of partnering community organizations helped the YCI project as a whole define our “focal sites” with more clarity. We defined three categories of community partnerships, describing three levels of increasing connection and commitment to our partner organizations:

- **Network Sites**—Other groups doing work similar to the YCI project, “Network Sites” can be any group or individual with similar goals connecting to us through the Internet or other means.
- **Partner Sites**—Communities where we are working and connecting with host organizations we consider “Partner Sites.” Local community organizations generally begin at this level of engagement with us, where we are connecting with existing programs of youth engagement or exploring possibilities for collaboration with local staff.
- **YCI Sites**—At the highest level of engagement, “YCI Sites” have established a deeper connection with our team to develop challenging programs dedicated to engage young people with community issues. A commitment of local resources to maintain sustainable programs is matched with increased commitment of YCI staff time and grant funds for digital literacy tools. YCI Sites have dedicated space and staff time to partner with us in longer term projects that deeply engage youth.

**Objective 3 – Accomplishments.** We proposed summer forums on campus for youth as a means of introducing youth to university life and exposing them to the LIS field. We organized two major summer programs, but also brought youth to campus for two professional conferences and for numerous working meetings (see the “Campus–community engagement” section above).
In particular, TAP In scholars and the five youth involved in E2Y have spent significant time on campus interacting with staff and students and becoming familiar with various university facilities. In 2009, E2Y participants took part in 15 open lab sessions in the GSLIS computer lab. In summer 2010, 15 5th to 10th graders participated in six TAP In photo editing workshops in the GSLIS computer labs, accompanied by their teen mentors, the three E2Y girls. In fall of 2010, seven younger TAP In scholars (3rd to 5th grade) participated in seven different workshops in the GSLIS computer lab. Over Spring Break this year, a group of TAP In scholars ranging from 3rd to 11th graders participated in a digital storytelling project using video. Finally, in March 2011, the three E2Y girls spoke to two different GSLIS classes about their work (“LIS 418 CEL: Community Engagement” and “LIS IBO: Inquiry-Based Learning”).

The 2009 Summer Forum, “Music as the Message,” hosted 20 youth who came from communities across the state with whom YCI had spent the previous year engaged in active partnerships. In response to a survey conducted by graduate assistants at the end of the session [see Appendix II], most respondents agreed that the issues YCI addressed were relevant to their community and to them, citing specifically: violence, learning opportunities, poverty, and school drop-outs as important themes. Most respondents said that the topic of the summer forum was relevant to their lives and explained that this is because they already use music to express themselves. However, respondents also had several suggestions about how to make such sessions better, including: “Make it applicable to everyone, not only to poor urban background”; “More interesting sessions with media”; “Longer week, including sports like basketball”; and “More free time around ourselves.”

- 18 out of 20 respondents to the question, Do you think you will be motivated to pursue similar projects on your own? (1=not likely, 5=very likely) responded 3 or higher. Nine responded 4, and three responded 5.
- Although 13 respondents said that the skills and technologies used during the session were not new to them, 7 said that they were.
- 18 out of 20 respondents to the question, How comfortable are you with your technology skills? (1=uncomfortable, 5=very comfortable) responded 3 or higher. Four responded 4, and 7 responded 5.

Objective 3 — Lessons learned. Numerous community partners have expressed concern for the enduring, if invisible, walls that continue to separate town and gown. Although this is something we recognized prior to initiating the YCI program, our partners have helped us to better understand that campus-community partnerships need to occur as much on university grounds as off. For example, the Champaign-Urbana Area Project (CUAP) partnered with YCI to administer the E2Y asset-mapping program. CUAP’s director Patricia Avery brought home the message that, in Champaign-Urbana, some African American youth from lower income families simply don’t consider crossing certain geographic boundaries:

Sometimes, African American students, they don’t go outside of their neighborhood boundaries. I mean, they go to schools, but right in our community we have the University of Illinois, which is a mark of our community. But many young people from urban communities, they don’t go across University Avenue because they feel it doesn’t belong to them. That university community out here is not gated, but it feels gated to African American students who are from urban areas.
Meanwhile, the comfort that TAP In youth now feel on campus is due to the concerted efforts of TAP In’s founder, Sally Carter, who spent many months trying to find a home on campus for her independent community program. Carter met resistance to her plans from various university administrators. In the end, Carter was able to connect with the McKinley Presbyterian Church and Foundation—a non-university facility whose community center is located on campus, directly across from the GSLIS building. Carter arranged to re-purpose some unfinished rooms in the building’s basement for her program. The TAP In scholars have thus been successfully integrated into campus life without directly battling university restrictions. Speaking to university and community members at the Community Informatics Initiative’s Mix IT Up! event this past spring, Carter told the group:

"I would really like to see more community organizations feeling embraced and open to the idea of coming on to campus. I know a lot of work is being done in terms of university-community partnerships where the university goes out into the community. But, for whatever reason, and I know that there are many, a lot of times community folks don’t feel welcome or embraced – they don’t have a sense of belonging or even have an understanding of the inner workings of the university. I know that I experienced that firsthand, and a lot of it is understandable; there are a lot of entities in the university. But if we really want to prepare our youth not just for today but for the future, we have to find a way to engage the community and the university in a way where we can take students out of their comfort zone and their elements, and not wait until they’re juniors or seniors in high school or even when it’s time for them to go to college, but where they feel comfortable now, and feel that they are already a part of higher learning.

Objective 4 – Accomplishments. We worked with youth and adult leaders to develop information access technologies in their home communities. Our original model envisioned standard community technology centers, with networked work stations. That model was appropriate at some of the sites—TAP In, Paseo Boricua, East St. Louis—but we also found other ways to accomplish the same goals. In particular, we developed mobile toolkits for use in many sites. In others, we emphasized a particular set of technologies, such as video cameras, lighting, and tripods for the Urbana Free Library movie-making project. This work has informed spin-off projects that aim to equip youth in underserved communities (see What’s Next section, below).

Objective 4 – Lessons learned. Working to develop appropriate technology solutions with community partners helped us to see that, in the end, technology is only a small part of the broader skills, concepts, and methods that were needed to fully equip a community program so that it can accomplish its goals. Considerations such as when technologies were not appropriate also came into play.

We came to see the portable toolkit as essentially a Computer Technology Center (CTC) in a backpack, which in turn led to broader thinking about what was really meant by “CTC.” This led to further explorations regarding the location of computers within a physical space and a growing awareness that in at least some instances the concept of a computer lab was not appropriate for equipping a site, but instead that computers should be located where work was being done (for instance in break-out rooms used for mentoring) and also the greater use of mobile computing was important.
Summary.

Not every activity we did was equally successful, and more than once we had to accept the dissolution of different collaborations, but in general, YCI managed to engage youth across a wide variety of settings on “a range of LIS topics, using both face-to-face and technology-mediated distance mechanisms.” This included establishing valuable community partnerships—breaking down walls between the university and communities. Our partnerships also helped create a vision for LIS in which youth services include supporting the desire of young people to inquire into, and improve, their own communities.

In sum, we believe that we not only accomplished, but also extended well beyond, our original objectives. These accomplishments are discussed in more detail in the attached publications. Also, YCI staff are now working on a book about the project. The chapters tell the stories of work with young people throughout Illinois who are engaged in community building. The settings range from a small farming town to inner city Chicago, and with youth from ages 8 to 20. The stories involve community mapping, community journalism, library engagement, and computer networking. Each chapter addresses questions such as:

- What are the participants doing? What are they learning?
- How can new literacies be employed to enhance community inquiry?
- To what extent is this a good model for informal learning and community development?
- What role can and should adults play in youth-oriented community-based projects?

A tentative table of contents for the manuscript can be found in Appendix I.

We also worked with community partners to further their own goals related to YCI. For example, we assisted Virginia Community Unit School District 64 to obtain funding to equip a new computer lab and to win a $170,000 grant for the Apple 1:1 program ([http://www.myjournalcourier.com/articles/school-23873-virginia-approved.html](http://www.myjournalcourier.com/articles/school-23873-virginia-approved.html)). That grant covers the purchase of 115 MacBook laptops, upgrades to the school’s wireless network, software expenses and other services. Students will create podcasts, make movies and insert audio and video clips into research papers and presentations. We worked with Pedro Albizu Campos High School on a successful grant from the McCarthey Dressman Education Foundation for their urban agriculture in education program, which drew from YCI work. We helped the Champaign County Juvenile Correction Center obtain grants for its library. Together with TAP In, we successfully obtained $11,995 in funding from the university’s Office of the Vice Chancellor for Public Engagement for the proposal "Building Youth to Transcend and Examine Social Trends (BYTES)" ([http://engage.illinois.edu/entry/5878](http://engage.illinois.edu/entry/5878)).

*Final notes on technology.* Working with technology means recognizing that technology is complex and in constant flux. For the most part, goals can’t be tied to particular products—either software or hardware. Technology costs are high, and so future tech goals of community partners beyond the life of an individual grant need to be considered.

We initially chose netbooks (mini-laptops) for their light weight, low cost and mobility. As the projects developed, however, much of what youth were doing involved video editing. The netbooks simply were...
not powerful enough to handle multimedia production and created many frustrating instances of frozen screens. In hindsight, laptops would have been better for the toolkits.

Not all participants are fluent in all technologies. This had consequences in terms of working relationships between GAs and community members as well as in coordination and communication. For team collaboration we used several online tools—Basecamp (for E2Y); Google Docs; a now-defunct collaborative tool we developed in-house called the Community Inquiry Labs; two electronic mailing lists; regular email; and a wiki (https://apps.lis.illinois.edu/wiki/display/CII/Youth+Community+Informatics). A Wordpress site (http://yci.illinois.edu) was eventually selected as the best solution for YCI’s “public face,” as it simplified group content creation.

However, various participants struggled with some or all of these different technologies, which impacted their levels of participation and types of contributions. Both patience and flexibility were required by all in order to accommodate different partner preferences and abilities. For example, some partners used YouTube while others were in schools where YouTube was banned. Others used different video sharing services. Still others focused on still images through sites such as Flickr. It became necessary to experiment with various collaboration tools and, when there did not seem to be sufficient buy-in for a particular tool, other solutions were explored until the necessary feedback and involvement was achieved. One of the primary challenges with this strategy is that it led to many different online ventures, which on occasion became difficult to track and manage.

*Final note on community partnerships.* Work in the community means paying attention to small and large community impacts. Long-term thinking beyond the life of any particular project requires foregrounding the perspective of our community partners, and helping partners to identify and establish more university and community allies so that projects can continue past the grant-funded period. There are also competing demands and unanticipated changes for community partners. For example, one library dropped out as a partner when the director left for a new job in another town. As well, during the time of the YCI project, 4-H went through major organizational changes, funding challenges, and shifting priorities. Similar stories could be told about most of our partners.

At the same time, it continues to be difficult to get full recognition and buy-in from some university entities for strongly community-oriented programs, where a large concentration of effort takes place outside of academic culture. It requires considerable creativity on the part of project PIs and community partners to introduce academic culture to the merits of integrating community within campus life. It could be said that rather than needing to extend community outreach, those of us involved in participatory action research find that we need to extend “institutional inreach.” We need to foster a more authentic understanding within academia so that community engagement can move beyond
traditional outreach or service learning concepts, in which the focus is usually on university achievement rather than community empowerment.3

**Learning outcomes.**

The focus of YCI was on the creation of learning modules, collaborative community informatics projects, hosting university campus events for youth, and the development of digital tools. Learning by youth, youth leaders, community partners, parents, and university students and staff was implicit throughout, even though this was not a pedagogical project per se and did not involve an independent, formal evaluation component.

In order to assess learning outcomes, we used a variety of tools:

1. **Field notes** taken during site visits, workshops, outdoor GIS/GPS mapping, and other activities.
2. **Comments directly from participants** in their own media products, community brochures and websites, emails, co-authored journal articles and book chapters. These included assessments by teachers and other professionals regarding the learning outcomes they observed for youth with whom they worked closely.
3. **Study of the digital artifacts** produced by youth, including audio and video podcasts, movies, webpages, GIS maps, and other formats.
4. **Practice profile of inquiry**, which uses the Inquiry Cycle to examine learning in digitally enhanced settings and provides a useful link between theory and pedagogical practice. The practice profile can also be used as a tool for youth leaders as they plan projects and classroom activities to optimize learning.4
5. **Surveys administered during** the summer on-campus events and in other workshops.
6. Observations of youth engaged in community informatics activities.

**Outcomes for youth.** Youth learned from the project in many ways, not all of them easily predictable. Robin Fisher, a teacher in Virginia High School writes:

> As the agriculture teacher here, I see a lot of value in this for students with an ag background, because they’re going to go back to the farm and learn to use GPS in the tractors and in the field. A student here is doing a summer internship with the Cass County Highway Department [using GPS to map and mark the condition of road signs in the area, many of which need to be updated]. Meanwhile his dad is using it in the field. A lot of these students, if they can learn it here, they can help their parents to learn about and update their technology. They can bring that technology to the older generation and help them to incorporate it and improve their quality of life. The sooner these kids can be introduced to it, the more they can learn about it, and maybe even be able to go into a profession using it.

Jeff Bennett, another teacher at Virginia High School saw that students had learned enough to become assistant teachers themselves:

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We had two boys who were seniors this year, so obviously they won’t be back with us next year. But I think the four we have remaining are definitely going to take the course next year, so we’ll develop a Year 2, which will then be unique. Because of our limited resources, we’re going to be teaching Year 1 and Year 2 courses at the same time in the same room. We’re going to rely on those second-year students to help us with the first-year students—to teach them some of the basics. And then they’ll both have separate projects as well.

In that school, as in many of our sites, there was a high level of interest in learning employable skills. One of Jeff and Robin’s students later did a practicum, which stemmed from what he had learned in the GIS course:

“We know that these kids are going to go into fields that use these technologies. [Student] was a student in the class first semester; he now works for Cass Communications. He is using some of the technology in his job, and that’s why he’s not in the class the second semester. They basically gave him the opportunity to come work longer during the school day, and so we figured that was more hands-on training in a real-world application. I think the class really supported his ability and sparked this opportunity for him.

There is not room here to report experiences across all of the sites. These are covered in more detail in the attached articles. But we saw similar learning outcomes in other sites. For example, youth in Illinois Youth Media’s Engaging and Empowering Youth (E2Y) project learned a broad set of digital literacy skills, interviewing skills, public presentation skills, and the significance of community engagement through their community asset mapping. Evidence for this can be seen at http://go.illinois.edu/e2ymap. But beyond the particular activity and products they created, the youth themselves grew in ability and confidence. They presented to adult professionals at both the iConference 2009 and the Dialogues in Methods of Education meeting. They led the adults in GIS/GPS mapping activities and led discussions about the benefits and complexities of campus/community engagement. They spoke to graduate students in two different GSLIS courses. Thus, at these events, they were actual educators of those adults, not simply youth displaying their own learning.

The three E2Y girls have gone on to become mentors to the TAP In scholars—helping their younger peers to become comfortable on campus and passing on the skills they have acquired even as they gain new ones. As of the summer of 2011, the E2Y girls also became TAP In scholars themselves in the program’s new college preparation enrichment program for teens.

Outcomes for graduate students. This section describes some experiences of graduate students, but more generally, it represents learning by university staff and YCI, by GSLIS, and hopefully for the LIS field.

Nama Budhathoki, formerly a YCI graduate assistant, who is now a post-doctoral fellow at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, wrote:

[My dissertation research] enormously benefited from my association with YCI. It increased my consciousness to the activities of community and ordinary citizens, and deepened my interest in citizen science, a shift from my earlier interest in expert science. I am happy to share that this interest continues beyond the dissertation.

Daylily Alvarez, a YCI GA who provided multimedia instruction in the Barrio Arts, Culture, and Communication Academy (BACCA) after-school program and assisted in BACCA’s self-publishing
activities, received her MLIS in 2010. She now works as a Cybernavigator at Logan Square Branch of the Chicago Public Library, putting these skills to use professionally. During her time as a GA in Paseo, Daylily wrote:

> I love this community because it is a space of resistance and collectivity. Paseo Boricua has been an inspiration for me to work hard to serve Latinos and other minorities to improve the realities that we have inherited. My mission here is to help maintain the collections at the Andrés Figueroa Cordero Library and Community Information Center and to motivate BACCA students to do their best at everything they do. My long term goals are to work in public libraries in minority communities and promote youth literacy. I would also like to work for non-profit organizations that serve under-served populations.

Chaebong Nam, a graduate student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and a YCI GA, wrote her doctoral dissertation on youth civic learning in Paseo Boricua. In an article she co-wrote with professor Ann Bishop, Nam describes some of her learning experiences:

> When I first met the coordinator of BACCA to talk about my research, he asked, “What do we get out of participating in your study?” He talked about unpleasant experiences with some researchers who approached them, did their studies, and left without telling them anything about their research findings. This is a common ethical issue—breaking, entering, and leaving a community of strangers—that takes place in many community-based research settings. BACCA’s coordinator said that he did not want to have that type of experience again. He and other people in BACCA wanted me to share data resources, drafts, and reflection notes with them in order to help them reflect on their actions and improve their practice. Basically, they did not want to be just an object but a partner in my research as it affected their ability to address their own needs and issues.

Respecting this perspective, during my fieldwork I tried to set my role as learning from the community’s knowledge and practices, rather than just picking up the narratives and data that fit only my research questions. Community participants understood my intentions and accepted my partnership in their work. In preparing the BACCA culminating event, the BACCA youth included my photos in their presentation along with their own, saying “Why not? Chaebong, you’re a part of us.” In a similar vein, I have found another role as a CI researcher by contributing to sustaining the inter-institutional relationship between Paseo Boricua and the University of Illinois. Our research on multimedia literacy and youth development has benefited from the installed base of the collaboration between the PRCC [Puerto Rican Cultural Center] and GSLIS, while it also gives something back to both organizations. I have learned that when working together with a community, whether represented by an individual or institution(s), it is important to foster a meaningful partnership. This is not just an ethical issue; it is also a substantial factor in the validity of CI research and its ability to help communities and avoid harm in the future. (pp. 376–377)

Another graduate student, John Vincler, wrote about his experiences at Paseo Boricua with the YCI Newberry Library project, which he had initiated.

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6 A description of “500 Años de Historia Puertorriqueña a través de los Ojos de Otros (500 Years of Puerto Rican History through the Eyes of Others),” a collaboration between Newberry Library, GSLIS, and the Pedro Albizu Campos High School (PACHS) is available at: [http://www.newberry.org/exhibits/PuertoRico.html](http://www.newberry.org/exhibits/PuertoRico.html) and can be found in Appendix IV of this report.
John describes learning how to take a backseat to the wishes of the PACHS [high school] teachers after initially playing a more central role. He recognized that what Paseo/PACHS needed was a certain type of expertise and connections to other resources, but that the objectives of the collaboration needed to be determined by the community, and not his, or YCI’s, expectations. This meant stepping back as the community developed its own facility with the technologies and pedagogy. The youth leaders knew that they could now draw on professional resources for specific needs, but not to set goals or assess progress.

In her Fall 2008 field notes, YCI graduate assistant Chera Kowalski talks about starting with felt needs in the community, but goes on to see the larger implications for provision of library services:

*In the video and on the print handout for the Teen Center, the PAs [Peer Ambassadors] stated that they would like to put resource libraries in churches and in the Teen Center itself. I feel the PAs’ desire to have resource libraries in such places is proactive, but at the same time it made me wonder why? Why are they not utilizing the public libraries in the area? Why are they non-users? Does it have to do with access? Will certain members of the community feel more comfortable using a library that is in their church or the center? Is transportation to the public libraries an issue?*

She goes on to discuss computer access. Her points reflect what we observed with many of our community partners, a general feeling of a lack of welcome from public libraries.

*I also briefly discussed with PA their access to the computers at Urbana Free and Champaign Public libraries, since Karen informed me before that many could not use the computers there due to fines. I informed them that at Urbana they could use the computers without a card, but Champaign required one. This news did not seem to help many of the PAs because, as I found out, most reside in Champaign. We then moved into a brief discussion on why some of the PAs cannot get or do not have library cards. Many discussed how they have past fines from the early 1990’s and were asked for things such as social security cards when trying to resolve the matter… many PAs are reluctant to utilize the public libraries due to experiences such as these. I feel like they feel unwelcome there, and therefore, choose not to go. I would like to very much this change. I have strong interest in why people, especially youth, choose not to use the library.*

Throughout the project, graduate students explored different methods of assessment, including field notes and practice profiles—a complex problem when dealing with participatory action research like this. Their learning process can be seen in Appendix II, which contains these evaluations.

**Project impact.**

YCI has had an impact on the GSLIS curriculum and on similar programs at other universities. Sarai Lastra is Vice Chancellor of Information Resources and Director of the Virtual Library at Universidad del Turabo in Gurabo, Puerto Rico. About 10 years ago, she did her dissertation work at Paseo Boricua (through GSLIS). Having returned to Paseo and UI in recent years, where she saw rich activities sponsored by IMLS, she is working now to set up collaborations between the University of Turabo and GSLIS around CI.

In Fall 2009, Dr. XiaoXiong Xu, an associate professor at Ningbo University in China, joined GSLIS as a scholar-in-residence for six months in order to learn about the Youth Community Informatics program. His interest is in finding ways to create bridges between high schools, universities, and the community in
order to address the educational and employment challenges currently faced by Chinese youth. Xu is now planning a youth community informatics project for China (YCI-China) in which he will be adapting our YCI curriculum for his needs in China. The project will recruit high school and college students as volunteers, who will use new media technologies to help underserved communities. It aims to simultaneously accomplish two goals: (1) provide youth with hands-on experience using new technologies to help prepare them for employment, and (2) respond to the needs of underserved communities.

In collaboration with Juan Carlivan’s project in Spain’s Zubizarreta, Iván M. Jorrín Abellán, a visiting scholar to YCI in 2008–2009, has started a project in Miranda de Ebro with 20 youth leaders with the aim of mapping different social elements that impact youth. At this time, five different groups work in areas such as: youth participation (NGOs); youth leisure and entertainment offerings; youth and outdoor activities; training for youth leaders, etc. They use web 2.0 technologies including wikis, blogs, and mapping to promote and engage young people in community initiatives. Pictures of the program and the five different youth-created projects are here: http://www.escuelagiraluna.com.

Within GSLIS, several different community informatics courses have used YCI projects as case studies, even inviting youth and community partners from various sites as guest presenters. As well, youth librarianship faculty at GSLIS such as Profs. Kate McDowell and Christine Jenkins are beginning to incorporate community informatics into their curriculum. Our work has also directly influenced the shape of class projects in the LIS451 course, “Introduction to Networking Systems,” where the class explored equipping YCI community programs with the tools they needed. Experiences, findings and issues from YCI were incorporated into the first LIS490ST “Community Informatics Studio” course, which looked at design issues. The redesign of the Mary Brown Center in East St. Louis (documented at http://pcc.metroeastdigital.org/blog/?p=41) was a direct product of that course, taking into account many of these principles and deriving its look and feel in part from the ideas that began through the YCI research. These concepts also served as an initial starting point for Prof. Martin Wolske’s design of a new mobile desk for desktop computers (documented at http://www.prairienet.org/techforum/2010/08/building-a-rolling-computer-desk/).

In looking at the redesigned space at the Mary Brown Center, UI journalism professor Brant Houston saw in the space a reflection of the newsrooms in which he cut his teeth professionally. This led to the theme of the second Community Informatics Studio course offered in summer 2011 that explored how to combine programming and space to equip community media newsrooms. Working with pilot sites in both north Champaign and East St. Louis, students used the Knight Commission Report on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy, along with a report from the Institute for Interactive Journalism, and foundational readings in digital storytelling, community media, and innovative participatory journalism to frame and execute a plan of action to help integrate community media and citizen journalism concepts and programming within established public computing collaborative spaces (see http://www.prairienet.org/op/journalism/). The student projects leveraged past public engagement efforts through the Community Informatics Initiative, the Youth Community Informatics project, and the CU-Citizen Access project, among others, to support rich ongoing community-led projects at Salem Baptist Church and Dorsey Homes in Champaign, and the Mary E. Brown Center and
East St. Louis Park District in East St. Louis. The course was co-taught by Brant Houston, Department of Journalism, Pam Dempsey, CU-Citizen Access, and Martin Wolske, GSLIS. The work was funded in part by the UI Office of Vice Chancellor for Public Engagement and will conclude in fall 2011 by assessing the impact and sustainability of programming. This effort has the potential to shape programming nationally and internationally as former GSLIS students take on leadership roles in public and academic libraries.

The initial YCI curriculum drew from 4-H work and has in turn contributed to on-going 4-H activities, such as the annual 4-H Film Festival and Map Gallery at the Illinois State Fair. This event expects to involve over 100 youth from across the state. As noted above, University of Illinois Extension 4-H has recently hired 11 new 4-H educators to work with metro youth audiences across the state. The YCI curriculum is expected to be a valuable resource for this team as they establish new programs in partnership with community organizations, as well as to other university departments and to the ongoing youth engagement efforts of our various community partners. This is discussed in greater detail in the next section of the report.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The YCI curriculum and experiences will continue to be developed at GSLIS, thanks to a recently awarded, three-year IMLS grant for master’s students to work with local partner organizations—the Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club, the Champaign County Juvenile Detention Center, the Peer Ambassadors, the TAP In Leadership Academy, and the Urbana Neighborhood Connections Center—in collaboration with the Urbana Free Library, in a collaboration dubbed the Youth Advocacy Alliance. The principal investigator on this project is Rae-Anne Montague, assistant dean at GSLIS, who anticipates that the Alliance will grow over the course of the new grant cycle.

Along with five community partners, GSLIS will recruit and educate 10 master’s degree fellows from underrepresented groups in a dual youth services and community informatics focus. This program, which will involve concentrated experiential learning, emphasizing engagement and youth advocacy, will work closely with underserved local youth on multiple literacies. The scholarship recipients will engage with community partners as part of the Youth Advocacy Alliance.

Jeanie Austin and Joe Coyle, who run the ELSEY program, have also been working with different GSLIS instructors to integrate program objectives into the general master’s curriculum. Through curriculum module development, the juvenile detention center library project will be supported by GSLIS student coursework and by practicum students. The project will continue to network with other community organizations, to present and network with other juvenile detention center librarians, and will move forward with linking youth to the local information resources. The project will also extend collection development to support teachers and community organizations working with youth in the center. According to Austin:

Joe has worked diligently to network with core courses and with GSLIS students to raise awareness of the juvenile detention center library project. While we are doing this in order to help sustain the juvenile detention center library, Joe and I have both taken community informatics courses, and, we, with Rae [Montague],

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recognize that the lessons learned in community informatics would benefit all librarians (rather than only those interested in participating in community outreach or activism). Through curriculum development, we are providing future librarians with opportunities to examine traditional library practice and to gain skills consistent with the American Library Association's diversity initiatives.

In 2011, Senior Research Scientist Martin Wolske successfully applied for an internal UI Public Engagement grant for his proposal, “Equipping Citizen Journalists: Establishing Community Newsrooms in North Champaign and East St. Louis.” Building on his work with Youth Community Informatics as well as another community informatics project called C-U Citizen Access, he will be working with other university researchers and community partners to encourage citizen journalism and community media through the creation of community newsrooms in north Champaign and East St. Louis. The grant will also support research into the impact and sustainability of these programs.

While she continues to work on her PhD in Education Policy, YCI graduate assistant Shameem Rakha plans to carry on her work with TAP In, helping to design future curricula for the program. Her goals include designing a pipeline program for high school seniors, which will incorporate career exploration, mentorship with racially representative community professionals, college entrance exam preparation, tutoring, and college application writing workshops. She also will serve as a go-between for the program and the school districts as the program moves into Edison Middle School and Centennial High School in Champaign, and support the program by assisting Sally Carter as needed to procure funding and connections with the university. According to Rakha, “Our presence as YCI will help to form these connections and serve to bridge a gap between the university and community.”

Ching-Chiu Lin, who worked with YCI in its early stages and wrote her dissertation on multimedia literacies, now works at the University of Vancouver, British Columbia, where she is continuing to pursue her interest in community informatics for youth. In 2011, Lin was awarded a post-doctoral research fellowship by Canada’s Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for her YCI extension project, “Media Arts for Inquiry: Investigating Youth and Community Development through Creative Practice.”

Nama Budhathoki, a YCI graduate assistant from 2007 to 2010, has made several exploratory visits to Kathmandu University in the hopes of initiating a YCI partner site there. Thanks to Nama’s efforts, Prof. Bertram C. Bruce, principal investigator of the YCI project, has been invited to visit Nepal to share YCI experiences. The possibility for introducing a course on community (geo-)informatics in Kathmandu University is currently being explored. As well, together with Nepal’s Department of Education, the Open Learning Exchange (OLE) is interested in organizing a workshop at the intersection of learning and digital technology. The goal of the workshop will be to influence policy. OLE’s educational program, including One Laptop Per Child, is pursuing similar goals to YCI.

Nama sees a strong connection between many YCI activities and Nepal’s efforts to engage and empower youth. Fruitful discussions with officials from the American Embassy have opened up numerous opportunities to share YCI’s work with different audiences.
GRANT PRODUCTS

This report is supplemented by 4 appendices:

Appendix I – YCI-related research publications, a YCI book outline (project in development), a bibliography

Appendix II – YCI project evaluations, including: field notes, practice profiles, survey results, graduate assistant reports

Appendix III – YCI curriculum materials and workbooks

Appendix IV – Portfolios of youth-created products. This is supplemented by digital copies of our YCI website archive, which contains links to many of the youth projects located on the Web.

PART II. QUANTITATIVE SECTION

Institution Name: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Grant #: RE-03-07-0007-07

A. SITE SPECIFIC PROJECT ACTIVITY

1. ___ Total # of collection items conserved, relocated to protective storage, rehoused, or for which other preservation-appropriate physical action was taken.

2. ___ Total # of collection items digitized, scanned, reformatted, or for which other electronic or digital preservation action was taken.

3. _7,000___ Total # of collection items with new or enhanced accessibility (include items that were cataloged or for which finding aids or other records were created or computerized) [includes 7,000 items made accessible to users other than grantee staff for the first time, _n/a_ items with new or enhanced access for staff only].

4. ___32____ Total # of lectures, symposia, demonstrations, exhibits, readings, performances, concerts, broadcasts, Webcasts, workshops, multi-media packages, or other learning opportunities provided for the public (do not include PSAs or other promotional activities) [includes 18 out-of-school or after-school programs, ____one____ exhibit].

5. _4__ Total # of tools created, improved, or produced for searching, information management, or information analysis by users other than or in addition to grantee staff.

6. _58_ Total # of conferences, programs, workshops, training sessions, institutes, classes, courses, or other structured educational events provided.
7. ___26____ Total # of internships, apprenticeships, mentoring opportunities, or other extended educational opportunities provided.

8. ___21____ Total # of degrees/certificates earned as a result of the grant [includes ___19____ Master’s, ___1____ Ph.D. degrees, ___20____ other (specify): certificates in Community Informatics______________________].

9. ___13____ Total # of technology upgrades or improvements (specify): 10 toolkits, two multimedia workstations (East St. Louis and Paseo Boricua, and two technology labs (East St. Louis and TAP In Champaign________________________ ________________________________].

10. If your grant engaged in other activities not covered by the categories above, please briefly identify and quantify them here. Attach another sheet if necessary

B. PORTABLE PRODUCTS (relating to the activity named in section A.)

11. ___24____ Total # of research reports, papers, books, reprints, or other publications generated.

12. ___5____ Total # of Web sites developed or improved [include URLs/addresses:

   http://yci.illinois.edu/yci/ ; http://cilabs.illinois.edu ; http://elseyjdc.wordpress.com;

13. ___57____ Total # of learning resources produced [includes

   ______ oral histories, _1_ guide____ curriculum resources, _54 units____ curriculums, ___2__
   Web-based learning tools, or ______ other (specify): ________________________________].

14. ______ Total # of key management documents created

   [includes ______ emergency plans, ______ conservation surveys, ______ strategic plans,
   ______ other (specify): ________________________________].

15. If your grant created one or more quantifiable products not covered by the categories above, please briefly identify and quantify them here. Attach another sheet if necessary.

C. PARTICIPANTS/VISITORS/USERS/AUDIENCE (relating to the activity named in section A.)

16. ___14____ Total # of community organization partners [includes ___13____ informal partners, ___1____ formal partners].

17. ___6____ Total # of schools (pre-K through grade 12) that used services provided by your grant (include only schools that actively participated, not those to which material was simply distributed or made available) [includes ___13____ students participating in field trips].

18. ___4____ Total # of teachers supported, trained, or otherwise provided with resources to strengthen classroom teaching or learning.
19. ____300______ Total # of pre-K through grade-12 students served [includes _300___ youth 9-19 who used, participated, visited, or otherwise interacted with activities, experiences, resources, or products offered by your grant].

20. _____Total # of viewers and listeners for radio, television, and cable broadcasts (for series, include total actual audience for all broadcasts; do not include audience for PSAs or other promotional activities or Webcasts; do not report potential audience).

21. ____50______ Total # of users of Web-based resources provided by your grant (include all individuals the project served). Choose the measure that best represents your use rate (choose only one): ____ visits (hits), ____ unique visitors, __x__ registered users, ____ other measure (specify):

22. ____350______ Total # of individuals benefiting from your grant (include all those from questions 18-21 plus others the project served, including staff or others in your field). Only include those who actually participated or used your project services in some way.

23. This number includes: ____9______ professionals, ____33______ non-professionals or pre-professionals, _______ docents or interpreters, _______3______ volunteers, ____5______ staff that received services provided by your grant.

24. If your grant served one or more quantifiable audiences not covered by the categories above, please briefly identify and quantify them here. Attach another sheet if necessary.
YCI-RELATED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Reports | Publications | Presentations | Posters | Public Engagement Events | Dissertations

Reports

IMLS interim grant reports can be found on the Community Informatics Initiative website.

Conference papers, journal articles, book chapters


Nam, Chaebong & Bishop, Ann P. (2011). This is the real me: A community informatics researcher joins the Barrio Arts, Culture, and Communication Academy in a health information campaign. *Proceedings of iConference 2011*, ACM Digital Library.


**Presentations (apart from papers) at conferences, universities, and research institutes**

**2011**


**2010**


Bruce, Bertram C., Duple, Robin Y., Rodgers, Susan R., & Williams, Noelle S. (2010, April 7). A community informatics framework for diversity. 2010 Diversity & Democracy Conference. Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society, Champaign, IL: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Bruce, Bertram C., Duple, Robin Y., Rodgers, Susan R., & Williams, Noelle S. (2010, April 7). Roundtable: Challenges and opportunities for working with the community. 2010 Diversity & Democracy Conference, Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL.

Coyle, Joe, Austin, Jeanie, Montague, Rae-Anne. (2010, April 9). Turning the page: Library services for incarcerated youth. GSLIS Showcase presentation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL.


Nam, C. (2010, Nov. 8). Youth community asset mapping: Beyond community mapping. The College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) meeting during the 90th Annual Conference of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), Denver, Colorado.

2009


Bruce, Bertram C. (2009, April 26). Youth Community Informatics. Scholarship of Engagement Seminar, Champaign: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Bruce, Bertram C., & Davis, Rita (2009, Feb. 26). Action research. GK-12 Winter Workshop, Champaign: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.


2008


Bruce, Bertram C. (2008, June 3). The future of the university: A university focused on the student [Plenary session]. International Conference UNIVEST’08: The student as axis of change in the university, Girona, Spain.


Bruce, Bertram C. (2008, July 16). New literacies [brownbag]. Champaign: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Graduate School of Library and Information Science.


Conference posters


Bruce, Bertram C., Bouillion-Diaz, Lisa, Bishop, Ann, Wolske, Martin, Ayad, Moustafa, Budhathoki, Nama, Kowalski, Chera, Nam, Chaebong, & Ritzo, Christopher (2009, April 6) Youth Community Informatics. GSLIS Research Showcase, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Bruce, Bertram C., Nam, Chaebong, Ritzo, Christopher. (2009, May) Approaching evaluation in Youth Community Informatics. 5th International congress of Qualitative Inquiry. Urbana-Champaign, Illinois.

Coyle, J. (2010, Jan.). Beyond access, beyond literacy: Restorative justice in a juvenile detention center library. BOBCATSS 2010, Bridging the digital divide: Libraries providing access for all? Parma, Italy.

Coyle, Joe, Austin, Jeanie, Montague, Rae-Anne. (2011, June 26). Turn the page: Library services for incarcerated youth. ALA 2011 Diversity and Outreach Fair, New Orleans, LA. (First place “Best of Show” winner, $200 award.)

Coyle, Joe, Austin, Jeanie, Montague, Rae-Anne. (2010, April 9). Turning the page: Library services for incarcerated youth. GSLIS Research Showcase, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. GSLIS Showcase, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL.


Completed dissertations partially supported or informed by YCI’s work


Berry, Patrick W. (2011). Beyond hope: Rhetorics of mobility, possibility, and literacy. Center for Writing Studies and Department of English, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Budhathoki, Nama. (2010). Participants’ motivations to contribute geographic information in an online community. Urban and Regional Planning, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Jean-Charles, Alex. (2010). Youth expression with video surveillance technology. Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.


Public engagement presentations (community events, schools, libraries, other organizations)


Carter, Sally. (2011, Feb. 18). Lightning presentation – TAP-In Leadership Academy. Mix IT Up! A Lively Event for Community Informatics Seed Fund Recipients, Community Partners and Interested Folks, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL.


Coyle, Joe, Austin, Jeanie, Montague, Rae-Anne. (2010, March 3). Turning the page: Library services for incarcerated youth. Public Engagement Symposium, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, IL.

**YCI meeting presentations**

