What Freedom Means to Me: Library Sponsored Student Video Competition

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Project Background

The Sesquicentennial of the U.S. Civil War was in 2012 and to celebrate this milestone, Marquette University held a year-long commemoration entitled “The Freedom Project” that explored the many meanings and histories of emancipation and freedom in the United States and beyond.

The Libraries participated by sponsoring a student video contest, “What Freedom Means to Me”, inviting undergraduate and graduate students to record 3 to 5 minute video reflections on freedom.

The contest also provided an opportunity to help publicize the Libraries Digital Media Studio started in 2011. The studio offers a plethora of media equipment for check out to students, such as HD video cameras, sound recorders, computers with advanced video and audio editing software and tech savvy staff to provide basic assistance.

How it Happened

1. Setting Up Contest Rules and Guidelines

After forming an interdepartmental team, this group developed the rules and guidelines for the contest based on researching similar student video competitions at other institutions. A contest rules document was written and a rubric was created for the panel of judges to rate the submissions with. The team also worked with the Libraries’ Coordinator of Digital Programs to create a workflow for getting submitted videos into the Libraries Institutional Repository.

2. Developing Promotion and Outreach Materials

The team developed a website containing the contest rules, important dates, rubric, media release forms for anyone featured in the submission. The website also included links to tutorials on how to use equipment in the Libraries Digital Media Studio and screencasts of how to use the editing software in the digital media studio to edit and export footage students shot.

3. Obtaining Contest Prizes

With no budget for this contest, the team needed to get creative about finding prizes. The team contacted the Marquette University bookstore and received free t-shirts, the Athletics Department donated some bobble heads and two basketballs autographed by the men’s and women’s basketball coaches, the campus coffee shop donated a pound of coffee and the Libraries Academic Librarians Assembly generously donated funds to purchase additional prizes.

4. Initial Results and Need for Revision

Low participation lead the team to decide to revise the contest. Instead of requiring students to create a 3 to 5 minute video, students would be asked to give a 30 second to 1 minute video reflection regarding freedom. Reflections would be made public via the Libraries’ Institutional Repository. New contest objectives, guidelines, promotional materials, release forms and timelines were created.

5. Meeting Students Where They Are

To increase the potential of student participation, the team went out to the students by setting up booths after a Freedom Project lecture and at the campus union. Students were invited to participate. Interested students needed to sign a release form before they were recorded giving a 30 second to 1 minute reflection regarding freedom. This proactive approach lead to 7 students participating.

6. Judging of Reflections and Awarding of Prizes

The team judged the reflections with a rubric that measured qualities such as originality and clarity. The top three students were awarded a prize package and the others received a t-shirt for their participation.