

Intro to Podcast Production – The Lodi Public Library

Project Description

In 2019, we won an Ideas to Action grant for \$5,000. The primary goal was create a project with the local high school to introduce podcasting to teenagers. The \$5,000 was projected to be split in half: \$2,500 for equipment and \$2,500 for a project intern who would spearhead the project.

Project Evolution

The Equipment

We couldn't find a case for the podcast equipment, which was an issue. But then in early 2020, a new case appeared on the market that fit everything and was easily transportable like a suitcase with wheels and handle. Problem solved. How would the students store and have access to their recordings? We bought them each a flash drive with a micro SD slot. Problem solved, but we only got two of the eleven flash drives back once the lockdown happened.

The Intern(s)

I was planning on hiring one intern, but decided to hire two that offered complementary skills, one with more of a tech background (Dusty Karls) and one who was a teacher moving into journalism (Andrea Gambaro-Gunn). This was a fortuitous choice. Dusty helped me learn the equipment and he also pinpointed Soundtrap as the best editing software for our project. Andrea Gambaro-Gunn helped to design the lesson plans for the in-class instruction and led several lessons.

The Classroom

I connected with Paula Tonn, the school librarian, and she helped us find a teacher willing to participate. Anthony Schnell's Chemistry 2 class had 11 seniors and it turned out to be a great first group, because they were high achieving and the class size wasn't big. We decided on six teaching sessions that mostly used the entirety of the block schedule, about an hour and fifteen minutes each.

Audience

The teens needed some convincing in the early days, but they enjoyed the project by the end. Now our audience is anyone who wants to listen to the podcast, either through download or streaming on our website. We promoted the podcast on social media, our website, and through our newsletter. It's spreading by word of mouth lately.

COVID-19

The library and school went into lockdown the week we were scheduled to have a listening party for the student work. We discussed the projects over Zoom about a month later. One student even did her project on the coronavirus. I took the equipment home during the shutdown and since you can record remotely, it gave birth to the podcast. I created music for the show and started interviewing staff members and now we're interviewing people in the community.

Community Impact

It's been great. We built good relationships with the teens and a stronger partnership with the school. We developed the project into a podcast called Duck Town. We are sharing the student work there and interviewing community members about their history, particularly their stories from the start of the pandemic. We already have hundreds of downloads and people can stream it on our website too. Just this month two local organizations have asked to partner with us to use the equipment, so the impact has been big and is growing. Now the community can tell (and listen to) its stories in a new way. Moreover, this is a project that can grow in all sorts of fun and creative ways. Our hope is to introduce a photography component to this project next.

Advice

The equipment and software we purchased are fantastic. They do require a lot of creativity, so you'll need staff interested in being creative or you'll need to hire people for that purpose. It takes many different skills and thus a lot of *time*. In our case, we needed to learn the equipment and teach it, find a good software and learn it and teach it, lesson plan and teach in class, establish recording times, help students produce, and find the time in our schedules and the school's and student schedules to tie everything together. Our plan was ambitious, but it was also satisfying when we pulled it off.