

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND  
INNOVATION CENTER FACULTY PARTNERSHIP GRANTS –  
APPLICATION

Please retype (11-point type) and answer each question using language as free of jargon as possible. You are required to respond to all items. Note: Your responses to items 1–5 cannot exceed five (5) singlesided pages. (Return to [fdic@eiu.edu](mailto:fdic@eiu.edu), by Friday, November 15, 2019, 11:59 PM)

For each applicant (or partner), list:

[REDACTED]

- b. Department (if applicable) *4. Art + Design*
- c. EIU Affiliation (college/department, or non-EIU Affiliation) *1-3. Library Services, 4. CLAS, and 5. KAZ Amusements and Entertainment*
- d. Address *1. 3513 Library, 2. 3509 Library, 3. 1045 Library, 4. 1349 Doudna, and 5. 1504 Madison Ave., Charleston, IL*
- e. Phone *1. 581-7550, 2. 581-7548, 3. 581-8456, 4. n/a, and 5. 217-232-1268*

[REDACTED]

Questions:

1. Provide both a title and a concise description of the project. Please include how the proposed project would contribute to the development of interdisciplinary teaching and research projects and/or partnerships beyond the university.

Title

Playful Partnerships: Cross-disciplinary Information Literacy through Escape Room Engagement

Description

A team of librarians will partner with art historian [REDACTED] and local escape room developer [REDACTED] to create an immersive escape room experience, grounded in principles of information literacy, for EIU students. Librarians and educators have long experimented with ways to engage students through fun, non-traditional methods. With the rise in popularity of escape rooms, librarians have begun incorporating such activities into the library and classroom to gamify the learning experience (Kroski, 2019; Pun, 2017; Wise, Lowe, Hill, Barnett, & Barton, 2018). Gamification has been shown to facilitate student learning through improved student motivation and engagement (Buckley & Doyle, 2016; Davis, Sridharan, Koepke, Singh, & Boiko, 2018; Gressick & Langston, 2017). Our escape room will target foundational library and information literacy skills aligned with the Association of College and Research Libraries' (the national professional organization for academic librarians) Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (ACRL, 2015). The project will also incorporate elements of EIU's Undergraduate Learning Goals, in particular Critical Thinking and Speaking and Listening.

The launch of this escape room is targeted to coincide with EIU Comic-Con, a mini-comic convention hosted by Booth Library and scheduled to be held on Saturday, March 28, 2020. Of the potential EIU Comic-Con events proposed to students in a survey this semester, an escape room drew the largest interest (155 of 229 of all respondents). As part of EIU Comic-Con, our escape room will be designed around the comic theme. Comics remain popular in today's culture, through print, film, and video game outlets. Booth librarians will draw on [REDACTED] expertise in comic history (as author of *Comics, Manga, Graphic Novels: A History of Graphic Narrative*, Praeger Press, 2011) to help with drafting the narrative and aesthetic of our escape room. [REDACTED] will bring in elements of comic culture in order to create a more captivating experience for student participants. Grounded in human social history, people are hardwired to better learn and retain knowledge through storytelling (Sandoz, 2006). By situating the learning experience within a central narrative, students' curiosity will be stimulated and they will better retain what they learn. The money from this grant will allow for purchase of props and materials to make for a more integrative experience. Art and library faculty members will be able to provide a novel environment for student learning and engagement.

Developing an escape room takes time, and crafting a memorable escape room experience requires a certain level of expertise. With that in mind, we have partnered with Charleston's local escape room designer [REDACTED]. Escape rooms include a series of puzzles that participants work on together. Puzzles are strung together such that solving one often requires knowledge or tools gained from an earlier solved puzzle. In order to obtain a greater level of ingenuity and finesse with our escape room, we will seek [REDACTED] advice and recommendations for creating challenging yet solvable puzzles. By reformatting an otherwise mundane library orientation, students will be exposed to core information literacy concepts in an exciting, team-based environment through which they must apply critical thinking and effective communication skills in order to solve puzzles and successfully complete the escape room storyline.

The library is a multidisciplinary hub. Librarians regularly collaborate with faculty from departments across campus in order to present inclusive learning experiences for students. In the development of this escape room, students will be required to seek information across the disciplines to solve the game's puzzles. We envision this escape room experience as a teaching tool that will attract faculty interest from a broad array of departments on campus. We will encourage faculty to bring their students to participate in this escape room beyond EIU Comic-Con. Following our spring event, we plan to use this escape room at other library outreach events, such as in conjunction with a class visit to the library, for library orientations, and at Prowl, EIU's transition to campus program offered at the start of Spring and Fall semesters. We envision building upon and further developing this escape room experience to introduce students to increasingly complex aspects of information and digital literacy.

2. Provide a clear statement of the objectives of the project. Please include how the proposed project will accomplish the goals of the Faculty Partnership Grants.

#### Objectives

This project will allow for the creation of an immersive, cross-disciplinary learning experience that will require students to think critically and work in teams as they apply aspects of information literacy in a gamified learning environment. Students who participate in the escape room will be stimulated to

think creatively about the role of the library and library services in their informational and educational needs.

Achieving the Faculty Partnership Grant's goals

This grant will allow for creative partnership between faculty members of the Art + Design department and library services. Coming together to develop a compelling multidisciplinary learning experience for students, [REDACTED] will integrate information literacy with disciplinary knowledge in a gamified environment. They will correlate game development with aspects of the Association of College and Research Libraries' Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (ACRL, 2015), which outlines benchmarks for students' development in their information literacy. ACRL Frames that will be addressed include Searching as Strategic Exploration and Information Has Value. In designing the game's puzzles, we will also integrate EIU's Undergraduate Learning Goals for Critical Thinking (asking essential questions; seeking, understanding, and synthesizing information) and Speaking and Listening (adapting impromptu discussions; using active and critical listening skills).

As a primer to the library's resources and services, this escape room will draw on elements of information across disciplines. The individual puzzles that comprise the room will draw on information literacy components of the arts and humanities, math and sciences, and social sciences. Librarians anticipate collaborating with disciplinary faculty after EIU Comic-Con to provide this escape room experience to university foundations courses and/or orientations and other social engagement events (e.g., Prowl). Puzzles will engage the visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic learning styles, providing a more inclusive educational environment for learners of all types.

Student learning will be assessed through the use of a short pre- and post-game survey, which will be distributed to participants before and after completing the escape room. The survey will be used to gauge how we might modify or improve upon the escape room learning experience. It will also help inform librarians as to how elements of play and puzzle solving might be used in our traditional library instruction sessions, which are integrated into disciplinary courses, in order to improve student learning and engagement. By introducing the library to students in a fun and welcoming manner, we are able to encourage student use of the library, which has been shown to improve student GPA, retention, and graduation (Emmons & Wilkinson, 2011; Haddow, 2013; Soria, Fransen, & Nackerud, 2013). Game-based learning in the library is associated with a reduction in library anxiety and an increase in student information literacy test scores (Dale, Wetzel, & Kani, 2019; Wise et al., 2018).

3. If the grant involves more than one applicant, provide a brief description of the role of each applicant in the proposed project. (Only one applicant needs to complete the application, but list all applicants/partners.)

Librarian faculty ([REDACTED]) will serve as the primary developers of the escape room. The librarians will create puzzles that tie in elements of information literacy and library skills in order to teach in an integrative and immersive environment. The librarians will beta test the game with two groups: library employees and The Gamer's Guild (an EIU RSO). The librarians will serve as the main contact point during EIU Comic-Con to ensure the smooth operation of the escape room.

Art faculty member ( ) will help us create a compelling and inclusive storyline for the escape room that ties in with the Comic-Con event. He will also help us in developing artistic set pieces and prop design to create an engaging experience for Comic-Con participants.

For assistance with creating puzzles, the owner of KAZ Amusements & Entertainment ( ), will partner with us as a game design consultant. runs a local business that offers escape room experiences in Charleston. He will offer his knowledge in game development as well as escape room logistics in order for us to deliver a more polished product to our participants.

4. Provide an itemized cost estimate for the proposed activity and include any other monies you may be expecting towards this project.

As part of a recent Redden grant proposal, the librarians ( ) secured two Breakout EDU escape room kits, which include some lock boxes and locks. With a desire to provide a more sophisticated experience for students, we are seeking supplemental puzzle supplies. In addition, we would like to purchase props for the room to provide a more participatory experience. Purchase of a tablet computer will allow for the inclusion of digital puzzles, a mobile research tool, and the option for participants to take photos of locations in the library to be used as evidence in the game. To optimize the time we spend on this project, we seek the consultative services of our local escape room developer in Charleston.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost</u>
• Lock boxes	\$30
• Locks (e.g., RFID, directional)	\$40
• Props (e.g., items for puzzle clues, room décor, superhero cape(s), mask(s))	\$100
• Samsung Galaxy A tablet	\$230
• Consultation fee, Zach Klingler, Entertainment (local escape room developer)	\$400 (20 hours) KAZ Amusements and
<b>Total cost:</b>	<b>\$800</b>

5. Provide a working schedule for completion.

Since librarians are on a 12-month contract, they often work on special projects during intersession. The winter break of 2019-2020 will serve as the preliminary time for developing the escape room narrative and puzzles. Game development will continue into the Spring 2020 semester. Beta testing will occur in late February, with adjustments to the game made in March. The escape room will be ready for EIU Comic-Con (organized by Booth Library) on Saturday, March 28, 2020.

Task

Date for completion

- Begin development of escape room narrative and puzzles Winter break (Dec. 16, 2019 – Jan. 10, 2020)
- Continue game development. Purchase needed supplies (locks, lock boxes, props, etc.) January 2020
- Beta test game with library employees and The Gamers' Guild (an EIU RSO) Late February 2020
- Adjust game based on feedback from beta testing Early March 2020
- Launch escape room at Booth Library Comic-Con event Saturday, March 28, 2020
- Partner with additional EIU faculty and groups to further employ our escape room Late summer – Fall 2020 and beyond

### References

- Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). (2015). Framework for information literacy for higher education. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>
- Buckley, P., & Doyle, E. (2016). Gamification and student motivation. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 24(6), 1162–1175.
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