

Introduction

James Madison University (JMU) is a comprehensive university of more than 20,000 students who generate innovative ideas and avenues of research for the JMU community (About JMU). In talking with my practicum head, Seán McCarthy, there have been recent requests from the JMU administration to submit innovative ideas that could attract funding opportunities. Through this discussion there are many similar ideas about developing scholarly communication and academic publishing within our campus. Currently, student research and projects that are not moving forward to journal publication are being archived upon completion. This growing archive of student work is not easily accessible by students and faculty outside the classroom without having prior knowledge of the project or class. As a result, the idea of having a central location to feature student work, as in the James Madison Undergraduate Research Journal (JMURJ), has been a common topic in conversations across campus.

The student work we are referring to for the project outlined in this report is not work that has been published in student journals such as JMURJ or student journalism pieces published in *The Breeze*, but “original” research projects that are created within classes every semester and often go unnoticed once the semester is complete. We are working to meet the needs of our community and our institution by developing a central location, or what we are calling a social media layer (the term “social media layer” will be discussed in detail later within this report) that will provide easy access to student work, and help in sharing student work across campus and other institutions.

The creation of a social media layer can help to promote innovative student work as well as create a distribution channel that will make student work more available to audiences. A social media layer will provide students with the motivation to pursue their research interests, while also considering alternative ways to present their research by learning about other creative projects around JMU. This layer will not only benefit student development, but also faculty development as well. Faculty will be able to share their ideas with their colleagues and showcase their experiences in working with innovative student research at conferences. Through the implementation of this layer, faculty can also use this platform as a resource for generating ideas for new innovative assignments for their classrooms. Some challenges we foresee with this project involve two major areas—technology and sustainability. In relation to technology we will face the challenge of implementing a search feature that will connect the bepress database to the social media layer. The other major challenge we anticipate is the sustainability for this project. In order for this project to be sustainable, we will need continued participation from students and faculty as well as have the staff and training available to grow this social media layer in the future.

The following report will discuss the following,

- a brief overview of the two publishing platforms (bepress and WordPress) that have different capabilities, but together can help us create this “social media layer” for this project
- a description of what we are calling a “social media layer”
- the importance of digital storytelling
- the benefits and challenges of implementing this social media-like layer at the university level
- the departments and individuals at JMU that play a major role in this storytelling process
- the steps for moving forward with this project

School of Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication
Spring 2014 Master's Practicum by Christine Donovan (christinedonovan3@gmail.com)

This report was composed from a survey of literature and librarian interviews. Another large part of my research also originated from my personal experience in working for the Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) and as a member of WRTC 565, Digital Rhetoric graduate course.