Open This Box:

Leveraging the popularity of escape rooms to create an engaging library instruction session
The Team

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The Initial Idea

Why are we even doing an escape room anyway?
From Scavenger Hunt To Escape Room

- Focus on critical thinking
- Research process metaphor
- Keeping students engaged
- Intrinsic v. extrinsic motivation
The benefits of games-based learning--increased student engagement, motivation, and, ultimately, greater learning--are too compelling to ignore.

--Smale (2011, p. 49)
The Challenges

How do you build an escape room when all you have is a box?
Life is like...
## Preparation
- Start with what you know
- Space and tools
- Budget
- Determine your audience
- Select a collaborative partner

## Learning Objectives
- Identify your goals
- Simplify learning outcomes
- Frameworks adjacent (addresses some-not all)
- Determine what you have time for

## Game Flow
- Dependent on your thought processes and visualization skills
- For us-start at the end and work backwards
- Red herrings
• Call number
• Subject heading
• Author

Book

Reference Source

• Book index
• Word decoder
• Research starter

Article

• Puzzle
  • Visual clue
  • Word clue
  • Opposing Viewpoints
Game Elements

Ready, Player One...
Escape Room Puzzles
Game Room Experience

- Library Survival Guide
  - Received previously
- 20 minute abbreviated library instruction
- Handout-overview/purpose

- House rules
- Assessment
- 30 minute game play
  - Red herring clues
I’ve got a golden ticket!

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It’s Dangerous to Go Alone

Golden Tickets
We didn’t want the students to struggle. Most commercial escape rooms state a 20% success rate, but we want 100% of our students to be successful.

Implications:
- Metaphor for getting help from the reference librarian.
- Students were reluctant to ask for assistance, but most would not have solved all of the clues within the time limit otherwise.
Assessment

We’ve [not] made a huge mistake
Quantitative Assessment

93%
Students who identified correct pieces of a properly formatted citation

65%
Students who identified the correct location of a call number
Qualitative Assessment

On a 1-5 scale, rate how confident you are using the library and how you feel you worked with your team.
What was the most difficult part?

- Searching the catalog (I had to go to the second page; God forbid haha)
- The false clues were challenging but fun
- Trying to figure out the information in the book, where we had to line the paper with the cut outs to the words
- Figuring out which resource to use
- Figuring out the clues
- Finding the right place to look for the book
- finding the similarities of the sources and finding the envelopes
- Interpreting the clues
What was your favorite part?

- Being able to use a golden ticket when we were stuck
- Working with my classmates
- The thought and time put into creating this very interactive way of doing research
- The complexities of the clues
- The challenge of it [sic]
- The satisfaction of completing the puzzle
- Solving the puzzles
- Everything and the candy
Assessment Outcomes

- Changed the format of clues
  - Moved from text based clues to visual clues
- Made tweaks to clues
  - Fixed typos, clarified wording, etc.
- Fine tune difficulty of clues
  - Want to challenge them, but not too much
- Future puzzle ideas
  - Students were inspired by red herrings
Lessons Learned

Check yourself before you wreck yourself
Challenges

● Space!! One room—very confined
  ○ Required sending students out of the room at one point

● Time Limit (50 minutes)
  ○ Students and librarians felt the crunch

● Scavenged Resources
  ○ Tape, envelopes, color printer

● Librarian thinking differs from student thinking
  ○ Even in the beta testing phase
Positive Outcomes

- Students immediately engaged with the room
- The teamwork aspect worked very well

- Small budget now, but not 100% necessary
  - Spent approximately $250
  - Designing new instruction room with escape room in mind
Collaboration

It takes a village...
“The Library Escape Room helped first year students find their bearings and learn the resources and tools integral for their success as students. Perhaps more importantly, it helped them to see how essential and helpful library faculty are, and gave them a chance to build a relationship and stake in the library.” – Dr. Duncan
Future Collaborations

Jun  
Upward Bound

Jul  
Peer Tutors & Coaches

Aug  

Sep  

Oct  

Nov  

Dec  

Jan  
Intensive English Program
References


