GMC questions – October 21, 2013
April Hines:

1) How is this particular application unique in comparison to previous CoLAB sessions presented at UF? Can you explain in-depth?

What sets the project apart from other CoLAB workshops? For the first time:

1. The unique skill sets of a particular college (already interdisciplinary in nature) will be strategically connected to other disciplines on campus. While previous workshops focused on one-time themes such as sustainability or grants seeking, there has never been a unified series revolving around a particular college. Every discipline from health sciences to business to education can benefit from connecting with the next generation of bloggers, reporters, social media marketers, graphic designers, public relations reps and advertising associates.

2. There will be a five-part workshop series, each with a different theme, but held together with a common thread (communications). (Ex: Collaborating with Strangers in Communications and Health, Collaborating with Strangers in Communications and Data Management etc.) No other academic library in the country has taken on the role of convener and facilitator to spark interdisciplinary collaboration between a college of communications and other disciplines on campus.

3. An attempt will be made to transfer the process to another college. If the initial series of workshops is successful, and the project team is able to demonstrate the lasting benefits to the College of Journalism, the ultimate goal is the college will take ownership of future workshops and install the process into their own culture (providing location and advertising, choosing themes etc.) while the libraries stay involved as convener and facilitator. Transferring ownership opens up an opportunity for the libraries to connect their users with information in an innovative way while developing a more meaningful, ongoing relationship with the College of Journalism.

4. Qualitative data in the form of in-person interviews will be conducted with participants (who attended one of the five communications CoLABs) to answer the question, “What really happens after a CoLAB is over?”

2) How does this evaluation differ from the previous evaluation?

Since the Collaborating with Strangers workshops began 11 years ago, qualitative data measuring the ongoing impact of the facilitative process has never been collected. The project aims to gather such data via recorded interviews with prior participants. What happens after the CoLAB workshops are over? Are ongoing, meaningful connections being made? Do participants really follow up? What kinds of unique, innovative project ideas can be tracked back to a CoLAB? Until this point, the only data collected has been from survey questions and “Idea Board” answers submitted during the workshop itself.

We have anecdotal data from past participants, such as commentary from Humanities in the Public Sphere director Sophia Acord who stated (in her letter of support) her prior CoLAB experience is “continuing to bear fruit, in the form of grant proposals, faculty working groups, and team taught courses.” Data evaluated by David Miller and CAPES during prior sessions has shown when participants are asked what their next steps will be; many said they would follow up on specific opportunities which arose from their conversations such as internships, teaching prospects and data access. However, currently we have no data to support whether such follow-up is really happening.
IRB approval will be sought and interviews will be recorded as podcasts and posted to the Collaborating with Strangers website pending participant permission.

3) Are there any statistics on whether there is increased outside (beyond the workshop interaction) collaboration as a result of the workshops? Are there increased “actual” (not just potential) partnerships being developed between disciplines/colleges? Will this be a part of the evaluation process for this project?

Currently there are no statistics concerning collaborations made as a result of a CoLAB -- which is exactly the kind of unprecedented data the project aims to collect and evaluate. Willing participants will be interviewed by the PI and student assistant post-workshop about connections made, projects followed up on, new information passed on etc. CAPES will also assist with conducting interviews, coding transcripts, analyzing trends etc. The project team hypothesizes an interdisciplinary college such as the College of Journalism can especially benefit from a focused series of CoLAB workshops seeking to bring their unique skills to other disciplines on campus. The data collected will test the hypothesis. The in-depth qualitative research proposed here will test efficacy of the CoLAB process and has potential to be of great interest to other libraries (academic and beyond), journalism educators and other interdisciplinary colleges such as business and education. Such data also has the potential to encourage widespread adoption of the process which originated in the University of Florida libraries.

4) Which “past participants” will be interviewed as part of the evaluation? How will you recruit past participants to participate in the evaluation process?

Participants present at one of the five workshops in the CoLAB communications series will be asked via survey if they are willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Since all participant profile signs, photos and contact information are loaded into a password protected website, it will be easy to contact those participants who said yes. The PI and student assistant will reach out to prior participants, ask if they are still interested, and schedule interviews accordingly.