

Beyond Google Docs: Utilizing Video and Library Resources to Create Engaging Virtual Escape Rooms

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ABSTRACT

Creating a virtual escape room can be as easy as putting together a Google form. Crafting an engaging activity is trickier. By utilizing library resources to craft puzzles and filming short videos to foster a narrative, virtual escape rooms can be fun learning resources that teach about almost any subject.

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, I created a virtual escape room to help students learn about library resources. The narrative of the escape room focuses on a Bigfoot spotted roaming the library. To make the activity more engaging, several short videos were filmed to foster the narrative. Most escape room puzzles revolve around students utilizing library resources to complete objectives.

The interactive nature of databases and other library resources make them an excellent tool for virtual escape rooms. Although filming video can be intimidating, even simple videos add quite a bit to narratives. This poster will help attendees learn how they can incorporate these resources into their own activities.

The Basics

This activity is an escape room style game where students complete tasks and solve puzzles using Google Forms, various library resources and YouTube videos. Google Forms works well for this because it has functionality such as the ability to create branching paths, that other form-making software does not.

Library resources that were used for this activity include the Hunter Library One Search, ProQuest Central, Credo Reference, and LibGuides were used for this activity. However, almost any library database that focus on a variety of different source types and disciplines could be used.

ARCS Framework

Keller's (2010) ARCS Model of Motivation was used as the framework for creating this activity. ARCS stands for attention, relevancy, competence, and satisfaction.

Attention: The gamification of the activity, along with the videos, and narrative were constructed partially to hold the user's attention.

Relevancy: Throughout the activity, students are asked to perform various tasks. Most tasks are accompanied by an explanation on how the resources can be used to help them with their own research needs.

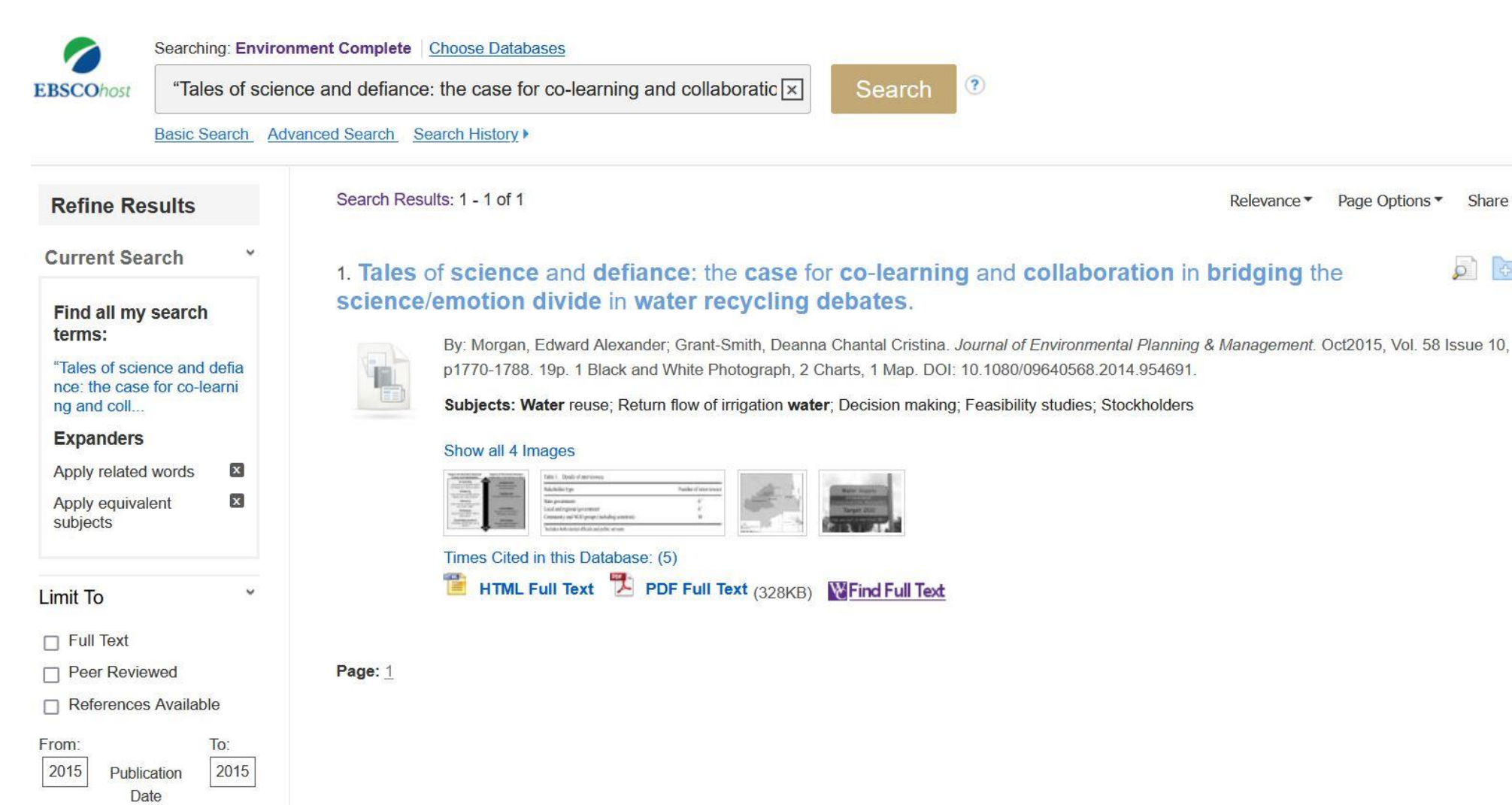
Competency: Although the activity was designed to provide some level of challenge, none of the puzzles was designed to be frustratingly hard.

Satisfaction: The narrative created an opportunity for users to feel a sense of satisfaction for completing tasks. By moving farther along in the activity, users were also able to move along the plot of the narrative. When they finish the game, they are rewarded with a final video that concludes the story.

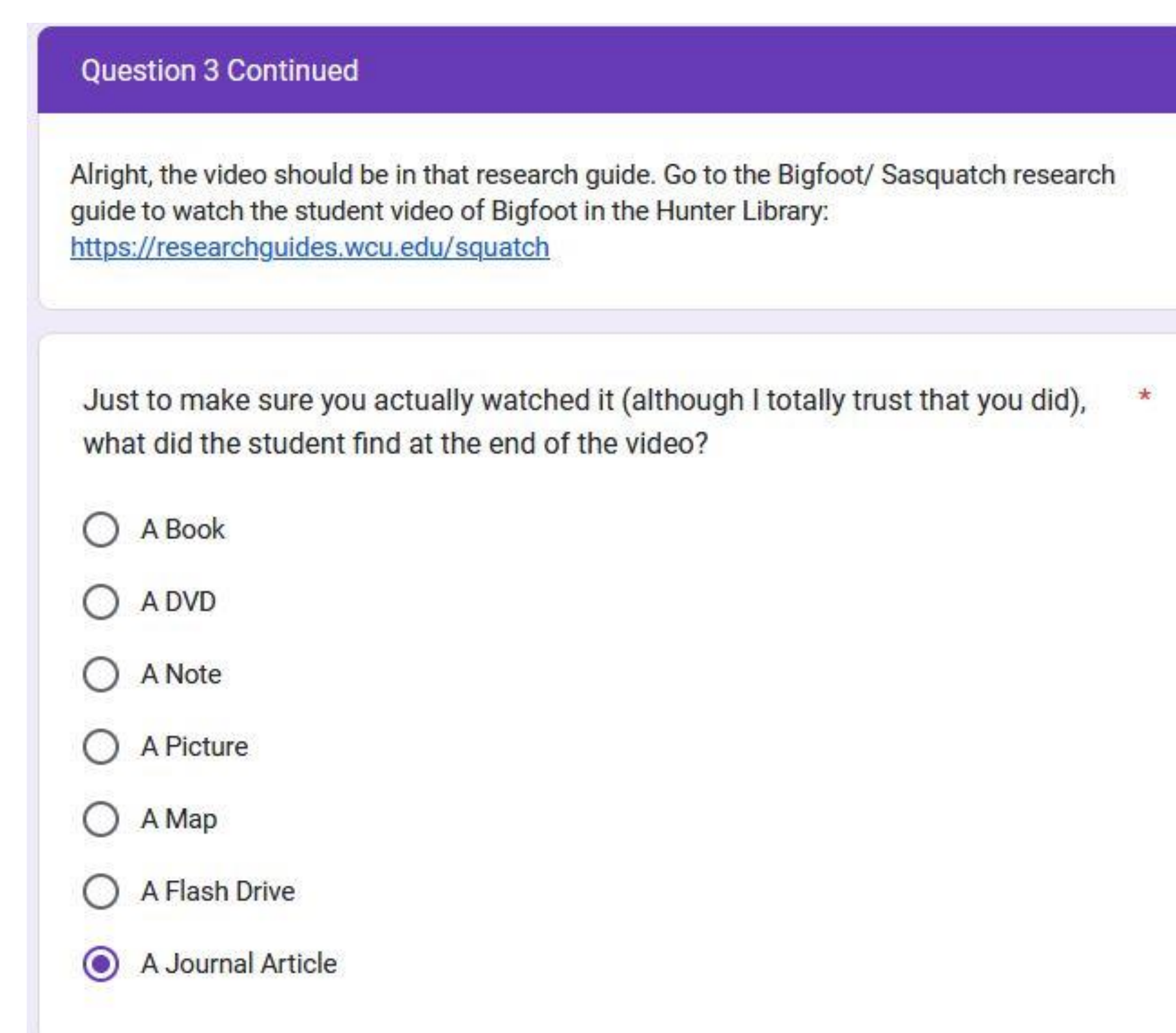
Utilizing Library Resources

In the Bigfoot Escape Room, I utilized several library resources to both introduce students to the resources and create puzzles. Many library resources are based around searching and finding, making them fit well into escape room puzzles. Students were tasked to look up an article in the ProQuest Central database, find a citation in a scholarly article, look up information from an encyclopedia article, search for a book in the catalog, and browse the library website.

The following example shows a database search for a journal article students are tasked to find. They then need to find a citation in the article to answer the question.



Example Question



Crafting a Narrative

The narrative of the Escape Room revolves around a Bigfoot that has been spotted in the library. Much of the story is told through found footage style videos that we hosted on YouTube. Found footage style videos are relatively easy to make and allow for voice over. They also feel like a clue you might find. Utilizing video helps break up the activity and make it more multimodal. They are also an easy way to add humor. I've gotten a lot of laughs from students when they see Bigfoot wandering around or when the camera person (me) trips and falls.

YouTube Videos



Video 1



Video 2



Video 3



Tips for Making Content Accessible

It's important to make any content involved in crafting puzzles as accessible as possible. Make sure to provide closed captioning to assist those who may have hearing impairments. For found footage videos, I found it ideal to describe what was happening as part of the video. This method both added to the narrative and created a way for students with visual impairments to follow along.

Google Slides does not have text description functionality for images. It is ok to use images for decorative purposes, but for accessibility images cannot be used as part of a puzzle.

Implementation

This activity was initially created for use in synchronous online classes. Since then, I've used it asynchronously, and as part of in person classes.

Tips for Asynchronous

This activity can easily be used outside of classroom time as part of an asynchronous class, flipped classroom, or as a homework assignment. For asynchronous classes, I use a version of the activity that requires students to share their name and email when they complete the assignment. I create a copy of the activity and share the results with the instructor. This way the instructor can track who has completed the assignment.

In Person and Synchronous Online Classes

When conducting the activity with a class, I've found it works well to let students work together so they can discuss the puzzles while they solve them. Being with the students also offers the advantage of being able to have a Q&A afterwards where I ask students what they learned from the activity and highlight learning objectives.

The largest problem I have encountered running this activity in person is that students finish the activity at different paces, so there is a need to have things for them to do while they wait for classmates to finish. I've developed two ways to fill this time. One way is to have students complete surveys about the library for our internal use. The other way has been to provide students with additional videos including library tours hosted by my dog: <https://youtu.be/yJ1CMg5M5x4>

References

1. Keller J. M. (2010). Motivational design for learning and performance : the arcs model approach. Springer.

