The Meat Shower Mystery!
Teaching Soft Skills & Information Literacy Through Immersive Experiences
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She/Her; Amiot rhymes with cameo.
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Ravenclaw, chaotic good.
What are we covering today?

• Defining key terms
• Looking at some professional escape rooms
• Video tour of the Meat Shower Mystery room
• Crafting your own experience which will test students’ information literacy and soft skills
• Questions and (hopefully) answers
Definitions
Escape Room, defined:

“Escape rooms are adventure games that task participants with solving a series of puzzles and riddles in a set time limit, all while trapped in a room.”

Immersive Experience, as defined by Charlie Amiot:

“Immersive experience” is a broader term into which escape rooms fit. Participants are immersed into a non-reality experience where disbelief is to be suspended for the duration of the experience. Outcomes and goals differ, depending on the experience.

Examples of immersive experiences include: escape rooms, renaissance fairs, live action role-playing (LARPing), and virtual reality games.
Soft Skills, as defined by Wikipedia:

Soft skills are a combination of people skills, social skills, communication skills, character or personality traits, attitudes, career attributes, social intelligence and emotional intelligence quotients, among others, that enable people to navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals with complementing hard skills.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soft_skills
Information Literacy, defined:

“The ability to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.”

https://literacy.ala.org/information-literacy/
What does a professional immersive experience look like?
Royal Escape Room: Escape the Rubicon

Royal Caribbean; https://www.royalcaribbean.com/cruise-activities/escape-the-rubicon
Nefertari’s Tomb; New Mexico Escape Room

https://nmescaperoom.com/scenarios/nefertaris-tomb/
The Family Jewel

New Mexico Escape Room

https://nmescaperoom.com/scenarios/the-family-jewel/
What does an immersive experience designed by a law library look like?
Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University,
Sir James Dunn Law Library

New York Law Institute, “The Search for Alexander Hamilton and the Missing Librarian”

- ISBN: 9780838917671
- alastore.ala.org

The Meat Shower Mystery
Immersive Experience
at University of Kentucky, College of Law
Kentucky Meat Shower, story origin:

- March 3, 1876
- Bath County
- Sunny skies
The leading theory?
Was it mutton?
Or something else entirely?
The Lab Table
Dr. Viande’s Desk area
Meat Shower Mystery Video Tour
THANKS FOR WATCHING
Research Scrapbook

Story

Cipher Part #1

Instructions

Names

Cipher Part #2

Cipher Part #3

Final Cipher

x 4 +

= Location of RFID keycard
DO IT YOURSELF

Crafting your own experience
STEP 1: Assess your capabilities:
- Space?
- Audience?
- Budget?
- Objectives?
- Time?
- Assessment?
Space

- Where are you going to host your own IE?
- Portable?
- Temporary?
- Permanent?
- Size?
• Who makes up your primary audience?
• What is their skill level?
• What do you want from them?
Budget

• Do you have one at all?
• How can you spend your funds?
• Grants?
• Access to campus surplus?
• Ask for item donations?
Objectives

• What are you trying to accomplish or teach with your IE?
• Soft skills?
• Information literacy?
• Print legal research?
• GovDocs Discovery/Use
• Tailored to a class?
• Just for fun/goodwill?
• How much can you devote to design?
• Running the room, which includes maintenance?
• How long do you want players to play?
• How long will it take to reset the experience?
Assessment

• How will you measure success for your IE?
• Participant success?
• Long-term success?
Other considerations include:

• Are you able to monitor all games?
• Do you need disclosures from participants, or IBR approval?
• Do you truly have the resources to take this on?
  • This includes a workforce available to not only create the room, but also run it.
STEP 2: Select a theme
STEP 3: Understanding the design process.
Required Reading:

Escape Rooms
by Jim Cain and Adam Clare

If you do not have time for this 15-page paper, you don’t have time for your own immersive experience!

Escape Room, defined by a creator of escape rooms:

- “[A] game played by a team of people where they have to ‘escape’ from a room filled with challenges within a given time limit. In order to win (‘escape’), the players must solve the challenges contained within the room. At the outset of the game, the challenges may be made inaccessible and must be found by completing puzzles.”
The Puzzle Loop:

1. A **challenge** to overcome.
2. A **solution** (may be concealed).
3. A **reward** for overcoming the challenge.

Cain and Clare, p.56.
Puzzle loop, illustrated.

1. A challenge to overcome.
2. A solution (may be concealed).
3. A reward for overcoming the challenge.
Things to keep in mind before designing and picking puzzles:

• Does your puzzle relate to your theme? Should it?
• Are your clues rational or do they make giant leaps in logic?
• Can the puzzle be solved using only the information within the room?*
• Can it be accessed by your participants?

*Cain and Clare, p.58.
Mental or physical?
The Meta Puzzle is solved by combining the pieces and clues gathered from the solution of two or more previous puzzles.

- Fairly popular
- Tricky if a piece can be discovered early that gives up a clue too soon.
Deciding on Puzzle Paths

Decide what combination is best for you as a designer, and for your participants.
Tween Programming — Escape Room in the Library by The Lego Librarian

END GOAL: Locked Box with Candy

THEME: Crazy Librarian’s Office

Key is in: Hollowed Out Book

Book has call number:

Call number is broken into three parts:

J 793.735 DOY

79

Hidden in box with number lock

Combination is:

Numbers on Broken Clock

3.7

Hidden in Box with word lock

Answer to lock is:

“BOOK”

35

Hidden in Box with padlock

Key is hidden:

Taped to bottom of chair

Hidden in Box with word lock

Word is written on:

White Puzzle

Clue to find key is:

Page from Goldilocks

Clue hidden in:

Locked Box

Key hidden in:

Dragon Puppet

Clue is:

“DRAGON” spelled out in sign language

Decoded With:

Sign Language Chart

UV Light is in:

Desk drawer, with sign saying “Use me to see in the DARK”

Portrait, written in invisible ink
Research Scrapbook

Cipher Part #1

Cipher Part #2

Cipher Part #3

Instructions

Names

Location of RFID keycard

\[ \times 4 + \text{Final Cipher} \]

= Location of RFID keycard

Final Cipher

x3
STEP 4: Source and assemble
Start with what you have!
Add some locks!

https://www.breakoutedu.com/locktips

Don’t forget spare keys!
Breakout EDU

Single kit, $150.00.

- https://store.breakoutedu.com/products/breakout-edu-kit-platform-access

Includes 12 months of Breakout EDU Platform Access
Our cost: Under $100.00
Puzzle Types:
What skills are you focusing on?

- Information Literacy?
- Soft Skills?
- Legal Research skills?
- Citation skills?
- General library skills?
Suggestions include:

• Hiding documents inside items;
• Clear objects in water;
• Counting items observed;
• Clues hidden in trash can or non-obvious location;
• Clues in pockets;
• Clue on bottom of an item not typically moved;
• Combination taken from date on a coin;
• Digital clues;
• Ciphers and riddles.
Difficulty Level

How much suffering do you want to inflict on your participants?

Clues and success rate?
What about red herrings and other forms of misdirection?
STEP 5: Test, test, test!
STEP 5.01-5.99: Fix what they break.
STEP SIX: Go live!
Questions? Thoughts?