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Formal Analytical Report: Reflection

Introduction

■ What was your topic for this research?

Our topic for our formal analytical group report was researching the usefulness of PowerPoint and Prezi in context of student use.

■ What was the inquiry question that guided your research?

The inquiry question for this research was which presentation software-- PowerPoint or Prezi-- was “the best” for students.

■ How did your inquiry question guide/frame your research?

Our inquiry question guided our research by making us, the researchers, allowed to make an informed decision about which presentation software we found to be “the best”. We had to figure out what kinds of things we would want from a presentation software.

Source Selection

■ What specific criteria did you use to help you select sources during the inquiry process?

Our specific criteria to select sources (and divvy up the work) were: teacher’s preference, platform compatibility, and usability.

■ Why were these your criteria?

We chose those three criteria because we asked ourselves: “What would make you more likely to use either presentation software?” and we came to the consensus that a teacher’s

recommendation, multi-platform compatibility, and accessibility/ease of use were our three deciding factors. Teachers usually recommend things when they find them useful in their classroom context, which helps the students utilize the best tools for the job, so to say. Platform compatibility was a must because not every student has access to their laptops or computers 24/7, but we do have access to our phones almost every waking second. Accessibility/ease of use was huge, because we need a program that ALL students can use without complication, as nothing is more frustrating than not being able to navigate a program you need to use for a class.

- **What is one specific source (list title and author) that you chose not to select during your inquiry process? Explain why you chose not to select this source based on your selection criteria.**

One of the sources I chose not to select for our formal analytical report was a “Harvard study” posted to a Prezi blog. Our entire group actually decided against this study blog because it was useless *and* paid for by Prezi. It was basically just a big Prezi-sponsored ad brought to you by Harvard. It provided no insight to any of our selection criteria. (*Harvard Researchers: Prezi is More Engaging, Persuasive, and Effective Than PowerPoint*, Prezi Blog)

- **What is one specific source (list title and author) that you chose to select during your inquiry process? Explain why you chose to select this source based on your selection criteria.**

One of the sources I chose to select was a blog from a university called the “Effective Use of PowerPoint”, written by University of Central Florida staff. It outlines how students should use and apply PowerPoint in an educational setting, and that fell right into our teacher preference section, which I was assigned to.

■ What was an obstacle you faced during the source selection process? How did you grapple with and/or overcome this obstacle?

The biggest problem during the selection process was finding articles and studies that were unbiased. Both Prezi and PowerPoint had paid-for “studies” and both championed themselves as the “best presentation software”. Unbiased studies were fairly difficult to find, and teacher preferences were no better. Teachers often want students to have a variety of options available to them, so as not to constrict their ability to complete assigned work, so finding teachers preferences that didn’t include an entire list of presentation software was basically impossible. To overcome this problem, I basically divvied up the mentions of PowerPoint and Prezi between all of the teacher preference sources, and tallied them out to see which had the most positive mentions. PowerPoint overall had more positive mentions, which gave me a good enough jumping-off point.

Source Overview

■ What were the major things/ideas you learned/discovered about your topic as a result of your inquiry process? (Be sure to list at least 3.)

1. I, and many other members of my research group, found out what Prezi is.
2. I found that teachers really don't care about which presentation software their students use, so long as they complete the designated task.
3. PowerPoint, although reliable, is \$70+ to buy and ultimately inconvenient for students.

■ For each of the things/ideas you learned/discovered about your topic, explain connections between what you learned and one or more of the sources you selected during your inquiry process.

To find out more about what Prezi was, I chose to look into Prezi's own website, as it is the more likely source to have information about what the program is, what it does, etc. I found many infographics and example presentations made with their software, which was overall very cool and gave me a better understanding of their presentation software.

Since we couldn't get a solid answer from our polling of Lane Community College teachers of which presentation software was better, I had to find other sources for that information (which was equally ambiguous) which led to me choosing a few sources, such as *21 Top Presentation Tools for Teachers* by Mike Daugherty, *Effective Use of PowerPoint* by the University of Central Florida, and *Prezi vs PowerPoint: Which is Better for Wowing an Audience?* By Carl Heaton. These all had some insight into which presentation software was better and why it was better.

PowerPoint and Microsoft Office have been well-known in every classroom I've ever been in. From my personal experience, I've found it very useful, but their prices are nothing short of laughable. My Office subscription actually got terminated halfway through my writing 227_H class, so I had to look into buying it for myself, and was thoroughly unimpressed. On Microsoft's website, the whole Office package for a student is \$70 per year. This was a small contributing factor to our research, as most of us never even had \$7 in cash on hand every month.

■ **Which source(s) that you found/selected during your inquiry process were most helpful in helping you answer your inquiry question? Why?**

The source that helped answer the inquiry question for me was *21 Top Presentation Tools for Teachers* by Mike Daugherty. It's a list of good presentation software, but what they had to say about PowerPoint just kills the buzz. No one finds it exciting, it's simply the go-to for everyone because Microsoft Office comes with nearly every computer. Prezi is always

described as something exciting and engaging, not just a means to an end. I found that source towards the end of my research, and it was just the little kick I needed.

■ **Which source did you find most exciting/interesting? Why?**

The source I found the most interesting was Prezi's homepage. They've got all sorts of images and interactive bits and bobs, and plenty of wonderful mock-presentations. Our group found one that (assumingly) was made by an anatomy teacher, that had an anatomical diagram of the body with each zoom-in point focusing on the certain parts. We also found one that was centered around the theory of relativity that would zoom out/in on a galaxy at every bullet point to provide emphasis.

Key Takeaways

■ **What are some key things you learned about yourself as a researcher during your inquiry process?**

As a researcher, I found that I'm overly critical of my work, to an obsessive point. This often leads to procrastination due to extreme feelings of inadequacy. It's not due to my actual quality of work, just the obsessive nature of needing to be the best at all times.

■ **Based on what you learned during this inquiry process, what are some key things you'll revise about your approach to inquiry the next time you engage in the inquiry process? Why will you make these changes?**

To conquer my OCD, I find that setting realistic guidelines for myself and telling myself "it's okay to be awful at this" and "it's better to do something terribly than not do it at all" helps tremendously in keeping myself on track and away from procrastination.

■ **What is one thing you found really successful about your inquiry process? Why do you think it was so successful?**

One thing I found to be really successful in my inquiry process was asking for help from my group members when I felt stuck. It worked really well for me because when you ask for help, or even just to bounce ideas off of another person, you've got someone else to filter through what's good and bad. Much like reading something aloud to yourself, my group members helped me filter out errors and make sense of things.

■ **Based on your experiences as a researcher, what are three tips you would give to other researchers who are engaging in the inquiry process? Be sure to explain why you'd offer each tip.**

1. Never be afraid to ask questions, even if you have a “stupid” question, as it’s better to have 100% clarity on a subject than be uncertain. This helps cut down on unnecessary research time and stress.
2. If you can, get a research group together to help with the process. If not for my group working with me to write our formal analytical report, my portion would have gone without revisions and would have been left with many grammar errors. Not only that, but the support from the other members was what kept me going through the research project. No one likes having to carry a group project, and I was lucky to have the group I did.
3. Take breaks and pace yourself. If you don’t create reasonable personal deadlines and schedule a given time for work, you’ll find yourself stressed out and scrambling to finish your research paper at 1am. I’ve done this more times than I can count from elementary school through high school, and I’ve had more stomach ulcers, tension headaches, and sleep deprivation than I want to admit from doing so. Setting aside an hour or two per day for research and writing can lessen the burden tremendously, as can divvying up the work (for example: doing X amount of bullet points per day). Self care is the most important piece to good work.