



## **Learning web documentary and data journalism through lab-based collaborative situations**

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In this paper, we present our experiences in the creation and running of a lab-based web documentary course and data journalism module at Volda University College in the Spring and Autumn of 2016. We collaborated with a number of industry actors in the delivery of the course and module, including the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) "P3 Dokumentar" (P3 Documentary, a unit dedicated to experimentation and development of the web documentary format in Norway), SMP Lab (the digital lab of the regional newspaper Sunnmørsposten), Google News Lab, and Tarjei Vassbotn (previously global head of IoT developer relations at Google and now at Disruptive Technologies) on the data journalism module. Our emphasis with these collaborations has been to create a lab-based environment where mixed teams of experts and novices could experiment together with new narrative forms and technologies.

The course in Volda is unique in three ways: it involves close collaboration with industry partners, including NRK, Google and Sunnmørsposten, it demands cross-Faculty collaboration in team teaching of the course, which is co-taught between Journalism, Media Production, Media Design, Animation, and PR, and it is lab-based with emphasis on field activities.

The model we have adopted at Volda is a lab-based setting with training in specific skills as well as training in new-technology adoption skills, where emphasis is placed in fostering collaboration between experts and novices. In the second version of the course, running in the autumn of 2016, we have made a series of adjustments that include the delivery of specific skills to complement the social practice focus of the course. A stronger component consisting of a curated online portfolio of web design skill building modules (sourced from various open learning platforms) has been added. While it is early to determine the success of this strategy, students have informally reported that they find the online modules a better way to learn web design skills, and have also demonstrated rapid acquisition of vocabulary and problem-solving strategies. With the inclusion of data journalism in the course, we see the opportunity to create a bridge for journalism students between a traditionally media production and writing oriented curriculum and a web design and coding oriented curriculum.

Student involvement is emphasized in the course development and semiannually evaluation and measuring of learning outcome is being systematized. Items we measure include a) personal learning outcomes, b) teacher and industry partner management, and c) supervision and evaluation during the course. Syllabus, curriculum emphasis and career outcomes are also evaluated.

As an external measure of the success of the course, the newspaper Sunnmørsposten has published one of the web documentaries developed by our students, "Mountain People in



Sunnmøre” (Fjellfolket på Sunnmøre). For the Data Journalism module running in the Autumn of 2016, we have received a request from industry partners (Adresseavisen) to produce a data journalism piece about bankruptcies in Norway. This project will give our students the opportunity to create a data journalism product that has the potential to be published to a wide audience.

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