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Creative Collaboration on a Creativity Book

Jane Harvey
State University of New York College at Buffalo - Buffalo State College, jhg_art@yahoo.com

Advisor
Dr. Cyndi Burnett
First Reader
Dr. Cyndi Burnett

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Creative Collaboration on a Creativity Book

A Project

by

Jane Harvey

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2015
Abstract

Based on existing roles as writer and designer, two Master’s students partnered on one project. This project was dually about the creative product and creative process. The final product result is a book on creativity, but much of the project learning was about collaboration during the creative process itself. The project included the creation of written and visual content and a production-ready book layout on the subject of creativity. This paper describes the process followed to create a fast reading, jargon-free book with a special academic end section.

Keywords: collaboration, creativity, design, partnership

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Jane Harvey
___________________________________
Date
CREATIVE COLLABORATION ON A CREATIVITY BOOK

Buffalo State College
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

Creative Collaboration on a Creativity Book

A Project in
Creative Studies

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Jane Harvey

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Master of Science
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Dates of Approval:

________________________
Dr. Cyndi Burnett
Project Advisor

________________________
Jane Harvey
Candidate
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Section One: Project Background

Project Background

As a background for this project, it is relevant to share my skills. My profession in graphic design and art direction began with artistic training in my youth and design studies leading to a B.F.A. in college. Through years of drawing, painting, and a career in design communication, I have the ability to “see like an artist and to think like a designer” (Wilson, T. K., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCRo5yHzPgs June 11, 2014, TEDx Bloomington). My creativity carries a nurtured experience, with a brain trained for a creative mindset.

Project Purpose

Though I have a history of personally identifying with creativity, I was not aware that everyone is creative. The purpose of this project was to develop a book to respond to the question, “What is creativity?” and allow all sorts of people to find themselves in the answer. The project was collaborative with partner Kathryn Haydon. Our plan was to deliver a small-sized, slim draft PDF book to ease readers into the subject of creativity quite comfortably. It was meant to appeal to non-academics and those who don’t identify as having creative potential, as well as the highly creative with experience and knowledge already. Our final product plan was for a light, meaningful explanation of some of the diverse elements of creativity in an attempt to demystify it for others. We hoped to ignite deeper interest in creative ability (Kelley & Kelley, 2013). Covey (2013) wrote about a student group project that sounded similar to ours. “They were hungry for something new and exciting, something that they could create that was truly meaningful. It was ‘an idea whose time had come’ for them. In addition, the chemistry was right” (p. 277).
MacLeod wrote how our authentic drive should be fueled to “make something special and powerful and honest and true” because there is something that we need to say or do (MacLeod, 2009, p. 28).

This project made the best use of individual talents and creative collaboration. On my end, I brought expertise in graphic design, illustration and layout with added copywriting experience. Katie brought experience and fluency in writing and poetry, and a passion for teaching. We both had drive for spreading creativity.

The goal was to design a creativity book that spoke in a casual voice with jargon-free language, further explained with imagery. An appendix of research endnotes would academically support the content.

**Rationale for Selection**

As roommates at ICSC in May 2013, Kathryn Haydon (Katie) and I discovered a shared birthday, like-minds, playfulness, and lasting friendship. We first collaborated in a writer-artist partnership in August 2014 while assisting with planning for the 2015 ICSC MOOC. We discovered a fluid ability to inspire and build on each other’s ideas. Our work ethic matched and individual talents and experience met as complementary skills. We also found synchronicity in creative alignment as we solved for content and art. We often found a concurrent mindset or shared ‘sense’ (Shenk, 2014). Rob Reiner and Robert Leighton (2014) credited their shared sensibility plus two similar instincts for successful creative collaboration. Leighton’s simple advice for success was to “work with people you like” (Leighton, 2014). Satisfied with our partnership’s successes, Katie and I collaborated on consecutive projects. I graphic recorded one of her teacher workshops, created graphics for presentation materials, and collaborated on her article for
The Creativity Post (http://www.creativitypost.com/education/ ten_ways_to_engage_ students_using_graphics_and_color). Our complementary skills built exploratory trust during playful collaboration. “It is friendship that yields true play, allowing us to check our fear, our embarrassment, and defenses at the door” (Brown, 2008, np).

In today’s deluge of available information, I have continually strived to ease learning for others by injecting more visual explanation into the abundance of words. Together, Katie and I planned to simplify ‘creativity’ and communicate it in a way that would resonate with others. We were, in a sense, summarizing and highlighting selective content to preventively tackle information overload. As we developed this means of communicating creativity, our ICSC graduate knowledge would be reinforced. Katie’s drive to get educators and parents to light up a child from their inner creative strengths aligned with my compassion for people who have forgotten their creative potential (Robinson, 2013). Craft (2006) suggested teachers and artists (or other creativity practitioners) should form partnerships to nurture creativity in education. Though I hadn’t known this about Craft when our partnership formed, it sounded quite right.

Katie valued my design process, and I valued her ease and natural way with words. We each independently worked from home, so we enjoyed the creative energy and results that occurred when we worked together. Shenk (2014) wrote on creative partnerships: “…the heart of the matter may be leaving behind an individual life and occupying space that is shared” (p. 41). What I have previously described led to a plan to fulfill the Master’s Project in collaboration. I like how Covey (2013) explained:

You’re not sure when you engage in synergistic communication how things will work out or what the end will look like, but you do have an inward sense of
excitement and security and adventure, believing that it will be significantly better than it was before. (p. 276)
Section Two: Pertinent Literature and Additional Resources

Pertinent Literature

During my literature review for this project, I had a few areas of focus. First, I wanted to resource content from experienced creative experts in order to validate our jargon-free voice and topic selections. Second, I wanted to explore simplification of content and the skill of explaining as it pertained to telling our story and communicating with our audience. A third area was to research creative collaboration. Reading what others have written on successful collaboration was valuable when documenting our collaborative process. It helped me pay attention to how partners worked together. The last area of my focus was reading about the creative process itself in a non-academic style, and as a form of inspiration to actively produce the book itself.


Arden was a UK advertising creative director with a brash demanding style. His sharp advice book is a best-seller, a fast read, and a valuable resource to add. The content is for business professionals, presented in a simple, big-picture, outspoken style to try and open up minds. Regarding overall career success, Arden addressed the need for confidence, risk-taking, activating our imagination, sharing our ideas, and striving to be our best.

The ability to read the entire content quickly matched the vision for our project. The artwork throughout is a diverse mix of mostly photos, photo collages, and a few drawings. A notable point I am familiar with is how big ideas start as roughs. When you need support for ideas, sketches are a format that will invite others into the imagine-zone.
Showing a sketch in rough format makes others feel involved and connected to your idea. “Because you haven’t shown the exact way it’s going to be, there’s scope to interpret it, develop it and change it as you progress” (p. 81).


Kleon wrote practical advice from his career experience as a writer and artist. This fun book was a direct inspiration for how we envisioned the style and complexity of our project. The amount of reading and small size were ideal. It had a casual feel. Simplistic illustrations (all author-created) included a diversity of charts, sketches, quotes, photos and art. His advice “Write the book you want to read” spoke volumes regarding our project (p. 43).

Kleon paralleled art school and creativity teachings with advice: to gather information, copy the masters, and remix new combinations. His words supported my exploration for art and design on the Master’s project. “Take time to mess around. Get lost. Wander. You never know where it’s going to lead to” (p. 67). On the flip side was an important point about structure and how “…limitations mean freedom” (p. 137). With our project, once I defined the layout and format, I could explore within reason. “You make things with the time, space, and materials you have, right now” (p. 138). This ‘how-to’ clearly aligned with planning for our success of the completed project.


The founder of Common Craft, Lefever is an explanation specialist. His instructional video company utilizes whiteboards, paper cutouts, videos of a hand actively sketching with magic marker, and voice-over audio recordings. He writes about
making ideas easy to understand for effective communication. Lefever’s skill of explaining falls into the implementation phase of Creative Problem-Solving (CPS). “A great idea, poorly explained, ceases to appear great, and the cost is tremendous” (p. 34).

In our age of abundant information, Lefever stated “…most people have learned to cope by filtering out the things that do not interest them (p. 13). I can identify with his directive of helping others to see, feel smart, and to care. It takes empathy, providing context, and using simple language to package an idea for delivery. Simplifying information, the use of storytelling to connect people to information, and the use of visuals are all included goals for our Master’s project communication.


Another fun book on the creative mindset is MacLeod’s book. He offered advice and opinions from his personal experience, in a no-nonsense, humorous, casual tone. MacLeod is a copy-writer and cartoon artist whose uniquely messaged cartoons are key to his story. MacLeod’s advice: “Write from the heart” (p. 108) validated our vision for book style and voice. I reminded myself that this Master’s project was a creative journey. I knew my collaborative partner and I first had to please ourselves. We had a creativity sandbox to play in. Though lacking eloquence, MacLeod’s point “Nobody cares. Do it for yourself” shined a light on our Master’s project perhaps being more about the process than about the final product (p. 93).

The author emphasized hard work and productivity. I agree that there is no ‘easy’ in creativity. There are ups and downs, losses, and gains, and it takes massive commitment and perseverance. Shareable points from the author about ideas include:
“You don’t know if your idea is any good the moment it’s created. Neither does anybody else” (p. 1). An important clarification for non-readers of the book is that MacLeod’s title does not mean “Ignore all people, at all times, forever” (p 14). He emphasized that getting feedback is essential, which is another factor that related strongly to the success of our project.


This book took me a long time to read when considering and connecting my own experience and creative process. McNiff is an artist and professor of creativity enhancement (art therapy). He teaches creativity in a spiritual, but not religious way for psychological healing. In this book, he wrote about the creative process and provided examples from his own and other’s experiences. He expanded on imagination, experimentation, risk-taking, failure, vision, uncertainty, mistakes, continual searching and exploration. Discovery, openness, commitment, letting go, and practice were all written about from a spiritual, experiential center. McNiff’s stories about people who were unaware that creativity was available to them, or felt non-creative, helped personalize the same audience for our book.

McNiff described how “[c]reative persons live in a state of constant search and exploration” (p. 69). The following connected directly to my Master’s project: “Creative problem solving is a process of give and take. I have an idea that I want to execute, and I must adapt to what the materials of expression are capable of doing and what I can do with them” (p.15). McNiff also wrote about the creative process being a “reliable
teacher” (p. 31). This concept is an interesting connection to the overall course objective of the Master’s project itself.


Nachmanovitch is an author and musician (violinist) who wrote spiritually about awakening creativity and rediscovering free play. His book is about living a creative life, and finding joy and self-actualization through chosen creative expression. He explained creativity to be playfulness, risk-taking and learning from mistakes. It requires practice, courage, trust, and patience. The author touched on flow, collaboration, and freedom.

Nachmanovitch’s words read as Eastern philosophy, always meant to help others who face creative challenges and to find their creative voice. The following are two densely filled shareable quotes of wisdom. First: “The easiest way to do art is to dispense with success and failure altogether and just get on with it” (p. 135). Another: “With too little judgment, we get trash. With too much judgment, we get blockage” (p. 171). I found the depth and soulfulness of this book an interesting contrast to the positive, light book we were creating backed by academic sources.


I looked at chapters 11 and 12 of Osborn’s classic resource because they focused on creative collaboration. Osborn emphasized separately ideating as an individual first, before collaborating, especially during convergence. “To insure maximum creativity in teamwork, each collaborator should take time out for solitary meditation. By working together, a pair is more likely to achieve the best in creative thinking” (p. 146).
Several pages of our book rely on Osborn’s classic rules for brainstorming. Osborn’s evidence-based rules live on the walls at IDEO (Brown, 2009). Deferred judgment, informal play, and psychological freedom enable ideas to spark additional ideas and help minds to work together. “Group brainstorming provides ‘reinforcement’ by ‘rewarding’ all suggestions with receptiveness” (p.155). This ‘reward of receptiveness’ spoke to the steady openness and support which my collaborative partner and I maintained when working on our project.


Shenk wrote about eminent creative partnerships. I found it helpful to read about successful collaborative pairs to find words describing the creative process of building something together. When Katie and I first drafted plans for our concept papers, I wrote from the perspective of ‘we.’ It was often hard to look forward or backward regarding the project by saying ‘I.’ ‘We’ came more naturally when reflecting on the people (us), the process, and the product. ‘Ours’ felt right, so it was beneficial to read from Shenk: “Perhaps the strongest lexical indication of union is the most simple—the use of we” (p. 48).

Learning about famous creative pairs was an interesting way to learn about how collaboration worked successfully for others. Shenk wrote about balance, trust, playing, flexibility, praise, shared vision and shared sensibility. Finding what was unique about our collaboration was valuable insight regarding how our process worked. Our fluid and ongoing back and forth was effective because we were “…absorbed in a shared endeavor not despite but because of ample room to move” (p. 119).
Additional Resources

The following are additional resources I relied on for this project, and recommend to others, in support of content, process, and design thinking.


Grant, A., & Grant G. (2012). *Who killed creativity?... and how can we get it back?* Queensland, Australia: Jossey-Bass.


Section Three: Plan and Timeline

Process Plan

In order to frame a path forward for what we wanted to make and how we could achieve it, there were several process steps. The first step was individual and combined explorative visioning and inspiration gathering. Our second step was exploring what we each found meaningful about creativity and wanted to share with others. The third step involved book design and layout. A format was necessary to accomplish the project on time. Step four I have labeled ‘collaboration’ which was the process of working together to get the book done. Step five entailed finding and making the art. The intense sixth step was sourcing the book. In the final step, step seven, we sought feedback, which essentially took us right back into all the previous steps again for revisions, refinement, and rethinking. As you will see with further details, each step involved both divergent and convergent thinking, both essential in the creative process (Puccio, Mance & Murdock, 2011).

We employed both natural creativity as well as deliberate creativity, both individually and collaborative (Puccio, et al., 2011). Dreaming and visioning that began independently was enhanced through interdependent dialogue. Gathering inspiration, resources, and sources also required solo as well as combined effort. We had continual rounds of brainstorming, evaluating, feedback and prototyping. In addition to Creative Problem-Solving (CPS), I employed artistic exploration (Edwards, 1979). We gained progress from an organic flow of us each working alone, working together remotely, and working together in person. It was imminent to respect the creative energy of each other and the project itself.
1. Vision work. We first took time individually to vision what we wanted to put out into the world. After taking a few days to consider goals, we discussed big picture thoughts and clarified our potential audience. We also framed out what type of book we could reasonably manage to get completed in a one-semester time frame.

With an overall idea of our path forward, we referenced inspiring books. Harrison (2006) said borrowing “caffeinates ideas” and “brings on bounty” (p. 123). Kleon (2012) suggested to “embrace influence” (p. 8). We exchanged books based on the classic scholar’s book walk in CRS560 with Drs. Burnett and Keller-Mathers.

The book-dive was an ideal way to absorb what we were each influenced by when making selections. With an individually converged-on collection spread out to share, we explored further. We considered preferences such as design, layout, size, photography, illustration, voice, color, and volume of content. We noted what appealed and did not as
it pertained to our common vision and we compared notes for evaluation. The foundation for our book style took shape from the list of traits we evaluated.

Figure 2. Vision. Selected book characteristics.

Another early tool for guidance was the development of a vision-inspiration board. We captured appealing visual styles from other books, and I laid out a few pages for a mood board. This was smart grounding throughout the project and maintained alignment to our agreed style. My pages remain taped to my wall.
2. Build Topics. In order to plan topics, we set up a Google Doc in storyboard format and labeled boxes as ‘title’; ‘audience’; ‘why are we doing this? (goal); ‘process’; and ‘resource inspiration.’ The Google Doc was a place to capture early thoughts and maintain a central location for dialog. Remotely, we reviewed elements together to see where we aligned, and we clarified when necessary to resolve doubts or questions. Our content had a plan.

Figure 3. Vision. Mood board.

Figure 4. Build topics. Central document for remote work.
During an in-person weekend retreat, we transferred topics from the Google Doc, onto post-it notes. Moveable post-its made a helpful tool to identify overlaps, highlight weak areas, and converge on topics. We started to move topics around to build a cohesive flow for a story. We paid attention to where our energy rose.

![Figure 5. Build topics. Wall outline of book topics.](image)

Following the retreat, Katie used the selections to write an ongoing narrative, superseding the previous storyboard, but still part of the same Google Doc.

3. Book design and layout. Though a book begins in manuscript form, I knew that we needed a layout sooner than later. Immediately following our first retreat, Katie was intensely writing, and I got started designing. Once able to provide Katie with a page design, draft word count (per page), and clear structure, our constraints were defined. Seeing the design of a few draft pages was inspiration that provided further momentum forward. Prototyping “inspires new ideas” (Brown, 2009, p. 106). The plan to write a book became very real, and we were excited. It is important to note that I began with a design, but it changed as we progressed. I essentially set up a structure and then broke some of my own rules.

4. Collaboration and development. Katie and I already knew what worked for each of us. As grownups with skills and experience, there was no need to force fit tools
or process for this project; we just had to make the book. If we got stuck, we could identify where we were in the CPS process and utilize tools, but otherwise, we tried to proceed naturally. Natural strengths determined our roles: Katie would write, and I would design and illustrate. Our differences were unique, and our sameness was in vision and passion, or “…a relationship built on unanimity of purpose and fueled by individual liberty” (Shenk, 2014, p. 119).

We had co-ownership, and both contributed, alternating between ‘together’ and ‘alone.’ Once the book took form, the distance, the pauses, and the solo work felt organic. If we needed clarification or inspiration, we reached out and figured it out. We made sure not to shut each other out and were always open to the other improving something. There was safe and open exchange. “Two perspectives, two minds, two creative processes, working with good seed ideas results in quicker, better, deeper insights” (http://www.cooper.com/journal/2011/4/great_creative_partnership_pai).

Our system took form. We required routine access to each other with frequent communication. Skype, Google Docs, phone calls, PDFs, screenshots, e-mail, text messages, and in-person retreats were all utilized and provided areas for collaboration. On our four total retreats, we tried to limit distractions and made the most of shared time. Schrage (2015) wrote about shared space being the key to creative collaboration because creativity happens in the “…collaborative context of shared spaces where the real work gets done. It takes shared space to create shared understandings” (p. 2). Successful collaboration also meant working in solitude. Even on retreats, we gave each other independent time and space. The rules were ours to make by learning what the other
needed and what worked best. Our individual methods of structured routine provided discipline to work on the project (Currey, 2013; McNiff, 2003).

At times, we did blur the boundaries of our roles as writer and artist. Shenk (2014) wrote, “And while partners thrive with role clarity, they will be stifled by role rigidity” (p. 97). I wrote some copy. Katie added ideas for visuals. I sometimes cut copy or rearranged it. Our process was a fluid volley of back and forth: “…[T]wo partners may move between generating and testing ideas, between focusing on a task and goofing off, between ruminations and association” (Shenk, 2014, p. 135).

Katie got the idea to include some of her poems, and I had to make that work, and she also liked to binge-write. She gave it all she had, so to honor her effort, I tried to respond quickly and do my part with the layout. When she had a burst of writing, it was my turn to take the relay baton and run. It was important to get her words into the layout, take a step back and see what we had made. Alternating, we took turns taking the lead, but not rushing or competing. It kept us moving forward.

Katie and I both brought, and required, independence and self-discipline (Amabile, 1997). We expected quality—our best work—and kept each other motivated and on task. We had harmony in clarifying content and art, building on ideas, evaluating the fit of words and images, and the flow of the story. We gave the other room to make suggestions, request clarification, or ground what didn’t feel right. We valued “…a durable ‘we’ness built on a shared vision, patience, and time, careful planning, and a chance to be playful as well as critical with each other” (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 9).

On the central document, we began to write notes in a different color. My changes were magenta and Katie’s were purple. The colors flagged what needed
discussion and were an indication of work status. As she finished writing a section, she marked the text in purple, alerting me it was ready for copy flow into the design. Once I incorporated copy, I colored the text back to black. As more of the book took form, we maneuvered among a newly-made PDF, the Google Doc, reading aloud, or print-outs.

At our second in-person retreat, and after further progress on the book, we printed out draft spreads and Katie laid them all out on the floor. Getting a big picture view of the story-flow and content enabled a way to rearrange pages and see misfits or gaps.

We played well together, learned from each other, and allowed the process to evolve. During combined effort, two individual ways of working had to converge. We maintained flexibility and adaptability. On a call or during a retreat, we found freedom and flow in an exchange of ideas and evaluation, but with awareness of what had to get done. Some things got resolved faster than others, and we often left unresolved items for
rumination. There was no competition or conflict. We supported, grounded, and expanded each other and had confidence the other could professionally guide and evaluate the work:

A supportive and attentive partner increases the overall sense of safety, inspiring you to take risks and do new things. There is a contagion of expression when you work freely with a partner. Elements are added that just don’t exist in solitary practice. (McNiff, 2003, p. 35)

5. Exploring art. It was Katie’s idea to include my daughter Molly’s photography for the book. Katie’s passion to ignite students and build from their strengths found its way to my doorstep and right into the process of making our book. During the first retreat, while I was designing the mood board, Molly and Katie viewed digital photographs. Katie and I later reviewed her photo-selects and discussed which images might fit where. The photographs helped us see possibilities and provided inspiration for our vision. Molly was encouraged and nurtured by a creative heart different than mine, and that has an enduring benefit. Since then, Katie forwarded Molly the information for an upcoming photography exhibit near her town. My daughter had two photos accepted. Katie’s support for Molly’s creativity is the perfect example of the creative ecosystem we describe on one of the pages in our book.

Other imagery began as thumbnail sketches until I illustrated and designed to my satisfaction. Multiple concepts led to a selected solution for implementation, and final sketches often took more than one try until acceptable. Kelley and Kelley (2013) described rapid prototypes as “quick and dirty—exploring a range of ideas without becoming too invested in only one. These experiential learning loops help to develop
existing concepts and spur new ones” (p. 23). We brainstormed on initial concepts and brainstormed again when art needed reworking or to be eliminated. Photograph selections and drawings were tried out, played with, and enhanced by cropping, retouching, and adding words. I think that if the fit didn’t feel instant, we would try to let it ‘live’ for a bit. Some art grew on us, and some got killed. Each time I looked at the layout or PDF, I might see a necessary alteration or enhancement. There were iterations from developing as well as additional ideating (Puccio, 2002). Some images have changed several times in order to get them right. Brown (2009) said: “Individuals…that have mastered the mental matrix of design thinking share a basic attitude of experimentation. They are open to new possibilities, alert to new directions, and always willing to propose new solutions” (p. 71). Investing time to try different things and maintaining an open mind until a page spread felt right was integral to the process.

Not only did Katie select an initial pool of photographs, it is important to note that several image concepts were hers. One example is the carnival game (figure 9). She shared her vision, and I simply implemented.

6. Sourcing the book. The last stretch was the academic support for the Appendix. We had kept notes in the Google Doc for potential sources, but it was good to hold off until the content was firm. In several bouts, Katie did the heavy lifting for the Appendix research, and I assisted. She started a new document, then we reviewed and confirmed sources, making them pertinent, accurate, and succinct. There was wonderful dialog that derived from discussing and digging for sources, then taking the reader’s point of view. At our final retreat, we gave the book an overall read through and made changes together, many intuitively synchronous. Dr. Burnett reviewed and validated the
information a short time later, providing guidance for any changes. Dr. Puccio was another valuable set of eyes for helping to determine the best sources.

7. Feedback. When we had a first draft, we sent a PDF out to several readers for feedback. Comments from diverse perspectives were discussed together and taken into consideration, ultimately making the book better and sharper. Things that our brains may have already grown accustomed to were seen with fresh eyes, forcing us to see freshly again too. Changes were made quickly in response to simple fixes. Other solutions took more time and exploration. At a later stage, we got feedback from a few others.

As partners, we also had ongoing, back and forth feedback along the way. We often revisited art and copy. Though allowing each other freedom to venture off, we kept each other on track. If we didn’t agree on visuals or content, we talked it through and sometimes found new problems to solve. McNiff (2003) said: “New insights are always generated by the dialogue, which acts as a third and integrating entity” (p. 164). We maintained a respectful response time to apply feedback or new ideas, consistently delivering what we agreed to. Updated PDFs were opportunities to gain fresh perspective. We tried things, and if it brought us joy, satisfaction, and that feeling of completion, we knew we met the pinnacle for a page spread.

My feedback form was a bit of a fail. The MSWord document was to be included with the PDF of the book to capture official feedback as required for the project. The questions I wrote were valuable data we needed to collect, but the design was boring, restrictive, and non-creative. Feedback on the form itself was to make it more ‘fun.’ So I redesigned it, but instead of further problem-solving, we just dropped it. I was trying to
force a formal feedback process onto our casual, fun book. Dr. Burnett preferred PPCO, and others just shared feedback during conversation.

**Project Timeline**

The timeline structure was planned at concept stage (see figure 7). The timeline makes the process appear linear, but creative work is a non-linear, iterative process. We scheduled regular, bi-weekly meeting times but allowed for flexibility.

As far as time invested, we both worked well beyond the required hours, staying aligned to the planned time structure. I confess I did not track every minute or hour, nor did I include time spent on incubation, writing, or sourcing. My accuracy for the time spent on the literature review may also be off. Katie initiated a Google Doc for ongoing tracking of hours but it’s always possible for me to lose track of time when in flow.

Dr. Burnett advised us to get the project started earlier than required, and that drove the advantage for incubation. Completing work ahead of schedule provided us with an ongoing climate of freedom and adequate time to explore. I see how time was an ally for improvements. We did plenty of revisiting and refining, but I never felt it was overthought or overdone. Including a completed Appendix was not originally part of our Master’s project deliverable. When I saw how much writing Katie was prepared to do for the Appendix section, I foresaw another entire book. After she revised her strategy and leaned on me as needed, it came together faster than anticipated. The Appendix is a valuable and special part of the book and a fortunate inclusion in the final deliverable.
Figure 7. Project timeline.
Section Four: Outcomes

Creative Collaboration on a Creativity Book: Completed

Our book *Creativity for Everybody* provides casual, light, jargon-free reading on creativity. There are 26 subject areas, five personal stories, and six poems. Eleven pages of thoroughly researched endnotes support the content with sources and creativity concepts for readers who want deeper learning. The book is currently 84-pages of a production-ready book in PDF form. The 5.25”x7.25” paperback size is the same as Sam Harrison’s 2006 book *Ideaspotting: How to find your next great idea*. Book topics each get an individual spread, with text on the right and art on the left. Most content pages contain added questions or practice suggestions vertically up the side of the page to reinforce a concept. The book cover is a four-color design (see figure 8) and book pages are black and white with key memorable text in red. Visuals consist of 15 photographs and photo collages, 19 simplistic marker sketches, five graphics, and 34 additional mini sketches for the Appendix. Figures 9-12 show selected page layouts. Varied visual styles illustrate content and “amplify and clarify ideas” (Rohde, 2013, p. ix).

Figure 8. Book cover.
WHY CREATIVITY?

Do you consider yourself creative? Are you curious about creativity? After three quarters of a century of empirical research, we know that creativity indeed belongs to everybody. Creativity is personal to each of us and is deeply intertwined with who we are and how we live.

Unfortunately, myths about creativity abound, and we believe that these misunderstandings hold us back as individuals and as a greater world community. Here we have synthesized decades of research to open up the science of creativity to you in an inviting, easy-to-read collection of words and visuals. Creativity is one of our prime superpowers. As you learn more, you will be able to use it for positive growth, change, and innovation.

Figure 9. Sample spread 1 of 3.

LEVERAGING STRENGTHS AT WORK

Mandy joined a firm of 45 people as their director of marketing. This family-owned company had a 30-year history, but the employees clearly were not working to their potential. The staff was unproductive, and not functioning as a team. They hadn’t even held a team meeting in years! Mandy first met with individuals to determine their strengths, motivations, and goals, and reorganized the group based on these factors. Her boss was supportive and encouraged her decisions.

Now, the team is more productive, motivated, and accountable. They promote by training together, celebrating successes publicly, and finding training opportunities. Knowing everyone’s long- and short-term goals, Mandy can assign special projects that align with skills and aspirations, instead of having them on projects, friendship, reputation, or precedent. Regular weekly meetings are held to see the big picture, prioritize, and track success.

The energy and momentum of these changes have been tremendous. Job descriptions, motivation templates, and progress worksheets have been shared with other teams. Employees are happy, taking more initiatives, and are talking about it. Teams have shifted into forward planning instead of reactive fire drills. People are more excited to come to work, and to focus on efforts that increase revenue for the firm. This workplace transformation began with a focus on individual strengths.

Figure 10. Sample spread 2 of 3.
CREATIVE COLLABORATION ON A CREATIVITY BOOK

DIG DEEPER

The following is a collection of anecdotes and academic support for each page of the book. The research on creativity consists of a range of research on the topic. The research on creativity consists of a range of research on the topic.

9.9 WHY CREATIVITY?

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CREATIVE COLLABORATION ON A CREATIVITY BOOK

Figure 11. Sample spread 3 of 3.
Section Five: Key Learning

Learning about Learning

I learned through “…the spirit of adventure, the spirit of discovery, the spirit of creativity” (Covey, 2013, p. 275). Several things I learned I describe in this section. The project itself was a form of creative learning. Torrance and Safter (1990) understood discovery and learning: “People prefer to learn creatively—by exploring, questioning, manipulating, rearranging things, testing and modifying, listening, looking, feeling—and then thinking about it—incubation” (p. 13). It took much of my thinking and my time, but the work was a growth experience to savor.

Insulation

Apparently, we were brave and confident to attempt this project. When people learned we were working on a book, we heard the words ‘ambitious,’ ‘wow’ and ‘big.’ Katie and I, however, never saw it as a grand undertaking. It was just a project. In early days, I occasionally thought “are we nuts to think we can do this?” but that faded away when we were doing the work itself. We did not talk much about our book to others. Katie was very private about her work and we both felt vulnerable among numerous unstoppable-editor-friends. We each had to find our way into and out of the work before the two of us interconnected, and we owed it to ourselves to take the work as far as we could before we sought feedback. Looking back, I see we had intuitively created a buffer zone to protect the work from outside influence and criticism until we felt we had tried our best. At the outset, I had no strategy for insulation to hold a space of positive energy, but we ultimately created the climate we needed to achieve our best work. I learned how that helped to shape our process and our product.
Finding Flow

Watterson (1990) said, “It’s surprising how hard we’ll work when the work is done just for ourselves” (p. 2). I definitely worked hard and the project is evidence of what I am capable of with a positive creative climate. I now have this experience to share with others who want the same. With our final result, I see how this project was an opportunity for self-fulfillment. Getting lost in creating and energized by flow reinforced what I am made of (Czskiskentmihalyi, 1997). Developing this book and biographically documenting the project took me through my own creative process of problem-solving and helped refresh my love for design.

Content Learning

In order to explain creativity and make it meaningful, I learned quickly that we had to be authentic and let our concepts ‘speak’ naturally. There were a few pages of an early draft that sounded too forced and carried more of an academic voice. Our advisor Dr. Burnett was quick to catch it. We also learned that unnecessary or misfit topics did not reveal themselves right away. It truly requires an open mind to decide whether to let something go or allow something in.

The ICSC coursework and MOOC curriculum helped validate content selections but we didn’t let either define our direction. I noticed that my learning about creativity was and is continual. I see something in a new light or notice something that carries new and different relevance. This fluid perspective was helpful to validate content and consider multiple points of view in our audience. I also learned the book itself stands as a platform of teaching for me. As ‘teachers’, we are essentially guiding people to extract their creativity and set them up to use it.
Less is More

In order keep the high-level content engaging and meaningful, we needed it simple and manageable. The design layout—built for minimal content—might give the appearance of a quick project, but it took many hours to hone the book down to an essence. I now see how all our upfront work, prior to any writing or design, was CPS data gathering and clarifying. Simplifying requires tolerance for ambiguity. You have to be able to let go of something you worked hard on, and start fresh. I learned that essence about minimizing with clarity. I didn’t just remove elements or words, I added. Figure 12 is an example of words added around the floating bubbles to explain and enhance the concept of ‘freedom.’ Not until later did I realize the risk I took by collaging words onto an artist’s photographs. I was lucky to have an open-minded and young photographer.

Figure 12. Sample spread showing progression.
We Learn by Doing

When we got stuck, I often wanted to skip, move on and revisit later, but I learned that Katie preferred to trudge through. Somehow we managed to accommodate both preferences. There was balanced give and take in the trust between us. Shenk (2014) called it acts of generating and resonating.

As far as two minds, we were very productive together but frequently of one mind. This made me curious about just how we could think as one. Mercer (2002) explained ways we think together and jointly solve problems. "Cumulative talk is uncritical, non-competitive and constructive where each speaker builds on what the other has said, with the aim to create a rapport between the speakers (Waring, 2002, p. 567). "Exploratory talk involves mutual exploration, reasoned evaluation, resolution, criticisms and, explicit reasons and evaluations. In exploratory talk, the participants are not primarily concerned with protecting their identities, but with jointly and rationally making sense and gathering new information" (p. 567).

Katie and I learned how to nudge and inspire each other to sustain each other. The individual solitude we required was geographically ready-made, but we also needed energized for fresh insights. The project required predictability as well as potential for surprise (Shenk, 2014). It was always worthwhile to get a fresh look after having had a break. It was easier to catch something or see it differently, but after time away, we sometimes needed a recharge. I discovered that just the anticipation of what the other would provide was a reliable motivator and igniter. I sometimes gave Katie art as a ‘snack’ to fuel her. She fed me with fresh copy or a poem. When Katie was uninspired, I took a stab at writing to spur her on. I learned how her drive was fueled by seeing
something instead of a blank page. Every single time I sent her new art, she got excited. Even if the art never survived the cut, it created inspiring dialog, reigniting energy and vision. After a time break, it often took a while to dig in and reconnect to the work, but eventually I always found myself loving the book again.

Katie and I did not always have the exact same point of view. If one of us was ‘not sold’ on an idea, the other explained their intent. Sometimes an explanation was all it took. Other times, it led to educating. I learned we were complementary challengers who influenced each other. We collaborated on all of it, trying something new, adding, deleting or moving things around. I took risks when editing and testing Katie’s words, and because she trusted me, she gave me room to do it. In an ICSC video interview, Ruth Noller talked about her close partnership with Sid Parnes: “…we would anticipate what the other one would say and I honestly don’t know whether this is something that either we worked out together, or I worked out and then he took it over, or vice versa” (Murdock & Campos, 2001). Katie and I have fewer than two years of collaboration to reflect back on, but I can authentically agree with Noller regarding the separation of some of the work. You can’t always separate who did what nor does it matter. The reward is in the synchronous creative work and the final result.

**I am also a Developer**

I took the FourSight profile twice, and both times assessed myself weakest as a Developer. Because I understood the thinking styles to be separate, I had difficulty seeing myself in the Developer description, but I am clearly a Developer as a graphic designer. Our sounding board partner helped me see how graphic design constantly switches between ideating and developing. I had not considered how graphic design
encompasses all four thinking styles. Throughout the duration of the project, I stayed open to premature closure and kept rethinking art or content. Katie was patient with my circling back and open to considering any new connections or improvements. I found I had to solve an image alone, and experiment with art and design. Some drawings had multiple concepts and several versions. It was fun to surprise Katie with what I came up with, and I often surprised myself too. Certain changes occurred because there was an issue to fix, but most changes came as a result of nagging symptoms demanding my response (McNiff, 1998). I now have a better understanding of the Developer preference and find it interesting that I had not seen the FourSight and graphic design parallels before. I now see myself as the Integrator.

**It was an Unpaid Job**

A book is a brave undertaking that requires confidence and discipline to do the work. I benefited from Katie being an excellent project manager. She listed actionable tasks after a discussion. She reliably documented hours spent and initiated meetings with our advisor. Partnering made me accountable to do the work. “Most of us can work better creatively when teamed up with the right partner because collaboration tends to induce effort...” (Osborn, 1953, p. 144). Our partnership operated with a balance of structure and flexibility. We planned but allowed ourselves to venture freely as needed.

Optimism and fun fueled this project, yet we meant business. Nussbaum (2013) said best ideas emerge from a trust that suspends judgment and allows us to be silly and embarrass ourselves. “The creative process thrives on the sparks we ignite in one another” (McNiff, 2003, p. 186). This Master’s project was valuable unpaid work and a snippet of time where I could say I loved my job.
Better Next Time

What might have been better? Katie and I continually resolved issues in real time, with frequent contact, so having a third person as a sounding board ended up being ineffective and disappointing for them. This I regret. The collaborative nature of our project provided us with a built-in sounding board. I didn’t realize soon enough that we were forcing a nonessential role, and the insulation of our content had a negative effect on that third person. In the future, I would explain to others that it’s not personal when ‘what happens in the creative zone stays in the creative zone.’ The creative energy amongst collaborators has to be honored and respected, and even protected. I would not have been able to share that wisdom heading into this work. I hope I am faster in the future to recognize and manage people sensitive to being outside that creative zone.
Section Six: Conclusion

I think this project helped build me up as a transformational leader. My purpose was to meaningfully explain diverse elements of creativity to demystify it and ignite creative ability. I am initiating change by explaining creativity, empowering others, and encouraging creative thinking. Puccio, et al. (2011) stated that transformational leadership intentionally nurtures, challenges, and promotes creative thinking in others.

I selected this project to utilize skills I already had which may not seem like a stretch. What expanded for me was added layers of knowledge. One example of how my learning was reinforced was in the selection of creativity concepts and putting that content into personal context. Another layer was the creative process itself with collaboration as experiential learning. Documenting the process for the final paper revealed an additional layer of learning, and finally, all the content was validated by research—one more layer of knowledge.

According to Amabile (1998), my project entry resources were design and artistic expertise, and creative thinking, but motivation was a determinant for success. Katie’s enthusiastic delighted responses to new art or a revised layout were enabling extrinsic motivators for me (Amabile, 1997). My motivation for the project, heavily intrinsic, was the fuel. I loved the work, put a great deal of time into it, and pushed through challenges because I was deeply committed and interested. It was an expansive experience. You give what you already have, but during the process, you broaden to give more. I can also affirm that creativity takes hard work. It in fact does not happen by magic, but there are magical rewards when you stay with it, inject what you find personally meaningful, and allow creative action. When you persist, good things happen from trying.
Katie and I were compatible with skills that complemented one another, but the openness we each brought was essential for this project. Being open to each other’s influence generated bonus insights, ideas, and wisdom (Covey, 2013). Shenk (2014) characterized partnership as “…a source of inspiration and expansion” (p. 137). Besides unified creative strengths, natural friendship, listening, playfulness and receptiveness undergirded our collaborative effort.

We owed each other tangibles at steps along the way, making us accountable. We delivered art and content like it was a gift. This generosity gave an overall fun and nurturing effect to the process. Together, through partnership, we created a favorable, rich climate for producing creative work. The four Ps of creativity were all there: Two creative people, working by way of the creative process, supported by creative press, in order to make a creative product—a book on creativity (Rhodes, 1961)!

Next steps

I am pleased with the final project, which provides a strong base for venturing forward. I now have backup material for conversations about creativity, and one can’t help but begin imagining the possibilities. Our next step is to look into finding a publisher or to self-publish the book, and there is already creative momentum to build from what we made. We could start the whole process all over for a younger audience. Or, we might produce inspirational posters from some of the spreads. Keynote presentation materials could easily arise. New research could be incorporated. I don’t maintain an expectation that we have to build together. Everything we learned along the way will make future projects better whether we collaborate again or not. Millman (2007) captured Paula Scher’s view about what comes next: “You always have to be
striving to improve on the next project. The next project has to be what you’re aspiring for, not what you’ve just completed—you’ve already done that” (p. 49). And, we certainly hope our creative product serves its purpose and has some value and duration (Puccio, et al., 2011). The dream is to reach the audience we identified, make a difference, and make our mark.
References


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