Project 2: Networked Learning Space
Implementation Plan & Feedback Summary

Guillermo J. Holguin   INTE 4665/5665 Social Media & Digital Culture

As a first-time homeowner, there were things I had to learn about how to care for my home to make sure I would end up profiting when selling the home. Like many other new homeowners, there's excitement about owning a home which makes fixer-uppers seem manageable. Well, I relied on my parents, in-laws, and many YouTube videos when home improvements and repairs were upon us. However, I realized sites like YouTube and Pinterest were popular go-to sites for home improvement, but much of their information was unorganized and overwhelming.

I chose to create a Google+ Community targeting first-time homeowners looking for tips and how-to-guides from people that have gone through home remodeling.

Building a Learning Audience

I had studied interior design for a couple of years and became friends with many people in the interior design industry, so I decided to ask for their help by inviting them to this community and share their experiences remodeling homes.

I also noticed a lot of my friends on Facebook were either thinking about buying their first home or had bought their first home and were in the process of doing home improvements. I tagged them in a Facebook post inviting them to join this Google+ community and share their experiences, questions, and links to home improvement resources.

I hope to increase community members by asking Facebook friends to re-share my post.

Engaging the Learning Audience

I hope to engage community members by posting my personal progress videos and those of other homeowners. I will also schedule Live Video Broadcast sessions on Facebook and give viewers an opportunity to ask questions about the projects I'm working on or my experiences so far with the remodels I've completed.

Overtime, I also expect members to participate in polls and discussions. Due to the amount of time it takes to plan and complete home improvement projects I anticipate this may be a slow process.

## Establishing Immediate, Ongoing Relevance and Value

Inviting friends who are interior designers was a good start and tagging Facebook friends that are planning on doing home improvement projects also helped initiate this community, however, participation has been VERY slow. Personally, I believe Google+ Communities is not an initial go-to place for home improvement tips or ideas.

Sustaining the NLS

The community is currently at a stand-still. I wonder if perhaps Google+ Communities is not the best platform for this. I will continue to invite more people to join the community by posting in Facebook and assess growth. If there isn't enough member participation I will consider moving this to a Facebook group, YouTube channel, or Pinterest board.

Feedback Summary

The following feedback was provided by other students in the INTE 5665 course regarding my Networked Learning Space.
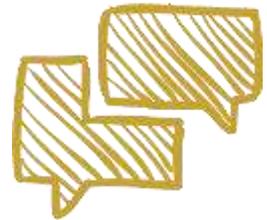
Question 1

Is the community description easy to understand the purpose of the community? Is the focus (target audience) clear?

Aby Kerr: Totally understood the purpose and description about the topic. I always look at things to read in a community in relation to spacing, length of paragraphs, and clear intent, you've checked all my boxes. I think it is nicely spaced, with a good length and text amount per each section, also there is a clear way for a new user to understand how to get involved. I already have some YouTube videos that I feel are relevant to post for people who are trying to do new house DIY projects and some questions to ask!

Jennifer Shelden: The community description is great! Easy to read, sectioned off well so that it's not just a clump of text, and I think it makes the focus audience very clear. I did have one question based on the Tips on Navigating though. You say that each post will be assigned a category...can you assign more than one category to a post? For example, you have several posts that could be "on a budget" as well as a room-specific. If you can choose more than one, I would highlight that since I think the ability to have a post in both could be a great asset!

Mary Heather Walker: I think that your community description is really good. It is clear and easy to understand. It explains your audience (new/future homeowners), but also leaves it open for more seasoned homeowners to share their challenges and expertise. I also really liked the way that you have your description in sections, breaking it into how to use and tips for using. One thing that I didn't see were any sort of rules or norms for the site. Having a section like that (for example at the end of the about category) would help set expectations for the site. I think your topic could lend itself to unwanted advertising, so having rules might limit that and help you keep the integrity of the site as a sharing community.

Question 2

I've created several categories, but I'm concerned about the wide range of topics. How can I better categorized posts for first-time homeowners?

Aby Kerr: I think you are pretty awesome at making categories, I liked your suggestions to mine and Mary's. Jennifer had a good suggestion about "financials" just coming out of over shooting our financial goals when it comes to a new home and the improvements, which I think everyone does. I think the budget category and a breakdown of actual receipts for projects and encouragement of what you spent too much money on posts would be great, also I understand this can vary by regions. I am also interested in the differences of what people use from the bog box stores, like we did a lot of Lowes vs. Home Depot runs and trying to find what we need from the stores. that would be something to think about for posting. Also, I think another interesting thing to have include posting for the category for 'on a budget' is using ReStore from Habitat for Humanity or other thrift stores and used goods places. Having a category for 'kids' rooms is a good idea too, there are many organizing dilemmas for kids rooms.

Jennifer Shelden: I know it seems like a lot, but there are a LOT of sections to renovating a home to consider. As an avid Pinterest user, I know I have MULTIPLE boards covering a wide range of topics, so I think people expect that from any "home" community. Once you get a lot of traffic too, it will help having the separate categories so that people can really search for exactly what they want. You wouldn't want to have to search through a general grouping of "behind the walls" if you were looking for just electrical. That said, maybe creating a catch all for "DIY" might be good for things like furniture renovations to catch some other like-minded thing. Also, I know the group is about home improvement, but you have an article about home loans, which is sort of pre-improvement, so I might suggest adding something in for "financial" where that post could go, as well as peoples' suggestions on how they saved money for their first home, what loan types/issues/tips they had, etc. I've recently done a TON of research about home loans so this may just be on my mind, but as a future first-time-home-buyer, it's something I know/knew nothing about and I feel like there aren't very good resources out there on it.

Mary Heather Walker: I completely understand your concern as I have the same issue. Are there enough categories? How many are too many? Are they the right ones? I think that as the community grows, additional categories will work themselves out, but you have a good start. As I'm sure you understand, being a new homeowner can be super overwhelming and there are so many places to go for research. What I really like about how you set up your categories is how they are clear and kind of designated by room or overall topic like pluming or HVAC. One concern that I have is if there is a way to have some posts in more than one category. For example, you DIY bathroom reno under $500 could go in "Bathroom" and "On a Budget." My first instinct would be to have it where you do (Bathroom), but in both categories would be ideal.

Question 3

If you were part of this community, what would motivate you to leave a post or comment?

Aby Kerr: I actually have a lot of ideas on what to post, we cut a hole in our master to put in a door into the backroom (which was quite a process.) I spent a lot of time getting a YouTube University Degree on how to tape and float and even though my dad works in construction seeing these things on video really helps. I painted our whole house and have some suggestions for painting tips... Like I said just coming off this topic and trying to think about hanging pictures, decorating, shelving issues (too many books not enough shelves), I think that I feel like your topic is super relevant and could really get a lot of traffic. I like Jennifer's suggestion about a post about yourself, Mary had one too in her's and it made a nice personal touch. I am going to make one in mine too.

Jennifer Shelden: I really like the polling feature! I think that's a great way to get people to dip their toes into interacting. Once they "vote" then maybe they get a little more comfortable posting, etc. I might suggest adding in some videos. Or suggesting others do video introductions/doing one yourself? It adds a bit of personalization to the post/group and hopefully would make people more connected to the group. (As a total side note, video introductions would be great for our grad classes in those "who are you" type posts, haha)

Mary Heather Walker: I think that with a lot of these communities, the key to motivate people to leave posts or comments is the ease of interaction. Your poll section is a good example. It gives people a way to be more interactive right off the bat. Another thing to think of is the visuals/pictures you are using with posts. The right visual will draw people in to want to learn more and possibly leave their thoughts. Another thing to think about for interaction is to ask questions to start discussions. One thing people seem to be passionate about are home improvement shows. You could possibly post a question asking what people's favorite show is. It could spark some interesting, but lighthearted debate to ease people into participation.

Adjustments from the Feedback

All reviewers asked if multiple categories could be added to each post but unfortunately Google+ Communities does not allow posts to be listed under multiple categories. This was really a bummer.

Mary suggested I had cleared expectations or rules to avoid unwanted advertising. I made sure to add this to the description of the community while reminding members that this was a place to share creative ideas and become inspired to make amazing home renovations.

Added a Kids category as suggested by Aby. I completely agree with Aby that there are many dilemmas when designing for kids.

Created more polls to engage members. I thought this was a great way to get people to participate. Usually with home improvement communities, many people are simple browsing seeing what others are posting/sharing. Using polls allows those "browsers" to participate anonymously.