Carnegie's Library Escape: Design Proposal

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Escape room is trendy and has gained popularity, where a group of participants are locked in a room, to escape the room they have to band together to form a strategy to solve riddles and puzzles, clues are placed throughout the room to provide hints to unlock the room. As Nicholas points out, "A game without play is not a meaningful activity for many. A key strategy of meaningful gamification is to re-introduce play into the equation in order to help participants find meaning in the underlying activity" (Nicholas, 2012, p.2). Escape room is a perfect engagement concept for educators to reinforce topics covered in classes.

I am call for duty to design an escape room, resulting from one of our weekly staff meeting, my dean is full of energy coming back from a retreat, he talks about the positive experience at his escape room and instructs his staff to construct an escape room design to be part of the upcoming curriculum. My initial design will have multiple revision; players going through the escape room challenge, finding issues with the puzzles or there is not enough clue pointing them in the right direction. As explained by Norman, "The hard part is to convince people to understand the viewpoints of the others" (Norman, 2013, p.32).

I start to brainstorm for the theme. Many ideas cross my mind and I can't decide on which one to go with. After careful consideration, I narrow down my search to a businessman who made a lasting impression and contribution to the educational field. Andrew Carnegie is that individual.

Who is Andrew Carnegie? Andrew Carnegie is a successful business tycoon who made his fortune in the steel industry and is known for his philanthropic work. In one of his popular writing, The Gospel of Wealth, he states "The result of my study of the question, What is the

best gift which can be given to a community? is that a free library occupies the first place… It is

no doubt, possible that my own personal experience may have led me to value a free library

beyond all other forms of beneficene" (Shaw, 1895, p. 433). He recalls his fond memories of a

visit to a friend's personal library who has a vast collection, paving the path for his love for

reading. He feels that everyone should have access to a library, donates a considerable amount

of his wealth to fund and to create libraries throughout the United States. For this, students

and learners should applaud for his generosity in making education a top priority.

What do I want to achieve from my escape room? The learning objective coming from

this escape room including fostering team work and collaboration, developing critical thinking

and problem solving skills, improving our communication skills and learning to access and to

retrieve content knowledge.

I will include a breakdown of my design in the following four paragraphs. The escape

room moderator brings the group to an introduction video. A lawyer comes on and gives a brief

background for the escape room. The video plays and the storyline comes up with Andrew

Carnegie, a man full of sense of humor, a love for adventures and his love for puzzles and

riddles. A reader finds a hidden treasure map in one of the book while reading at the library.

The letter explains there's a locked treasure, this hidden wealth is incredible once retrieve.

Another reader sitting across, eardrops and overhears the conversation. The mission is retrieve

the hidden treasure before someone else gets to it. If you decide to accept this mission, you

have sixty minutes to unlock the value or else the hidden secret lies buried again.

The library escape has three rooms. Each design room is different and with its unique

decor. The first room layout holds volumes of novels and books, section off accordingly to

topics. On the treasure map, a hint starts off with my love for equations. What type of equations? Participants are thinking and coming up with either mathematical equations or chemical equations. The participants decide to split into two groups, one group to Science related section and the other half goes to the Math related bookcase. After the extensive search, one of the participants from the Math section finds the note left by Andrew; on it written with an Algebra equation, asking to solve for X. Half of us is dumbfounded, since it has been awhile with this type of calculation, one suggest looking for a book to assist us. This equation is not straightforward, hidden with extras to throw us off. Finally, we are able to solve for X. We are glad to have the answer, but the next step is what? Our X value turns out to be 201. We are all thinking what it can be, one feedback is a code to the hidden lockbox, another suggestion is a telephone area code and the last one to chime in, a room number. The next room is secured with a push button combination lock. We try to enter the code and the entry is denied. We decide to head over to the floor directory to check if room 201 exist, no mention at all, as we return back to the bookcase, one notice 201 engrave on a plague on a classic phone booth. In it, there is a rotary dial phone, on three dials, smears of grease. We try the various combinations from the three digits, the code works and the door opens. Time check, time is of essence, we spent a quarter of the allowed time trying to figure out the first room. Plenty of time, no worries proclaim from two teammates, a sign of relief for others.

The group refocus and start to gather information from the second room. This room is full of hanging canvases and portraits. Immediately, someone calls out for his love for adventures. Canvas of various nature scenes, animals and self-portraits. Group still have no clue or direction to unlock the next room secure with a four- digit padlock. Everyone is busy

searching for digits. We find a magnifying glass on top of an oak table, the desk lamp turns on, a

hint, tuck away is a bookmark train ticket, but the numbers on it is not visible, so the group uses

the magnify glass to enhance the image. Two numbers out of the three are visible, the other

one was missing since the ticket is slightly torn. A portrait of Andrew Carnegie is standing in

front of a train, the group careful looks over the canvas and finds the three digit in front of the

locomotive engine. The code is correct and leads the group to the next room.

The third room is full of documents and prolific writings from Andrew Carnegie. On one

side of the coffee table, there is instruction for all to sit and to relax. One shouts time check,

everyone is scrambling, five minutes left, all hands in for a high five, we got this. Group start to

examine closely the documents and writings; some were inscribed with a watermark page

numbers. On the far right side of this room, there is a shelve with a full set of encyclopedia,

dust is settled on certain section of the bookcase, we decide to pull out the books. Only certain

ones come out, as we try the three numbers found on the documents, we match the number in

accordance to the alphabet position. The escape door opens up, comes down with a banner

that states "Knowledge is the only kind of wealth that multiplies when you give it away"

(Schwartz, 2018).

After the escape, the moderator brings the group in for a debriefing, he wants to listen

to the comments and suggestion of what works and what didn't, how to make even better and

the struggle they encounter as a group. A group photo is taken with the use of assorted props

to catch the moment. This comments are very handful for the designer to consider when

modifying or creating the next escape room challenge.

A smaller scale of the concepts can be applied to a regular school library depending on the measurement of the premise. The first concern is the noise volume and chatter that are generated once participants are engaged in the activity. It will be best to run the course during after school. Educators are facing with the daunting task to keep their lesson plans more interesting and flavorful every year, even though, the same content must be covered. The rationale before the escape room is to offer an engaging environment where students will have a lasting impression after they finish with their course as outlined in Nicholson's paper "Creating engaging escape rooms for the classroom" (Nicholson, 2018).

Carnegie's Library Escape

| Greetings | Intro Video | First Room | Second Room | Third Room | Debriefing | Photo |

Video Room → Room 1 Stack of Books → Room 2 Canvas & Painting → Room 3 Paper Documen → Debrief Room
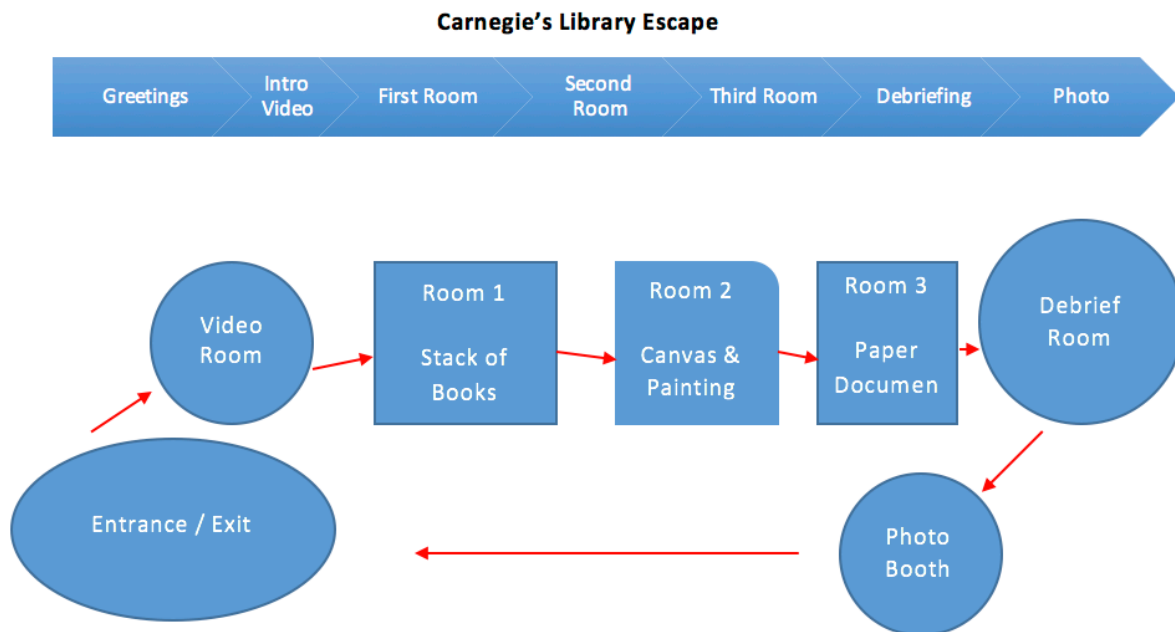
Entrance / Exit ← Photo Booth

Figure 1. (a) The process flow diagram shows the step movements of participants as they journey through the escape challenge. (b) shows the descriptive decor of each room, plus the library layout.

References

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