

Student Expectations from a cross-cultural virtual collaboration: A qualitative analysis

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Abstract: Peer assessment helps create a learning environment whereby students learn not only from the instructor, but also from one another and each other's work. The usage of cross-culture collaborations and peer review teaching methodologies in Library and Information Science (LIS) education have shown to benefit student learning. However, LIS students are often made to collaborate with their peers within the same course and from the same discipline. In addition, while social media has been used in education in recent years, the use of social media for cross-culture peer review is not normally seen. In this study, collaboration was carried between out 58 LIS students from Simmons College, Boston and 238 non-LIS students from Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore. Considering that the students were coming from different countries, different types of schools, different cultures and different age-groups, they were asked to answer a question pertaining to their expectations from the virtual collaboration. As expectations form a key basis for the success of any endeavour, the open-ended responses from both sets of students are analyzed. In this paper, we report the results of this qualitative analysis and identify a set of cost and benefit factors for the two sets of students. The study throws light on how LIS and non-LIS students view cross-cultural collaboration for coursework, and what their fears and concerns might be.

Keywords: expectation, cross-cultural collaboration, peer review, qualitative analysis

1. Introduction

A number of studies in Library and Information Science (LIS) have looked at various forms of collaboration – those involving the library, the instructors and students (see e.g. Besara and Kinsley, 2011; Williamson, Archibald and McGregor, 2010; Barratt, Nielsen, Desmet and Balthazor, 2009; Machin, Harding and Derbyshire, 2009; Haycock, 2007). An important way for students to collaborate is by providing peer review to each other on their assignments. Peer assessment helps create a learning environment whereby students learn not only from the instructor, but also from one another and each other's work. The merits of peer review include providing social support in educational pursuits

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and enhancing students' subject expertise level, self-esteem, self-confidence, cognitive development and improving student attitude towards the subject (Badger, 2010; Rourke, Mendelsohn and Coleman, 2008). The usage of cross-culture collaborations and peer review teaching methodologies in Library and Information Science (LIS) education have shown to benefit student learning. Student benefits include empowerment and motivation to produce quality work, promotion of critical thinking and cognitive development, nurturing a collaborative and cooperative community of responsible and self-confident learners who are better prepared for the working world (discussed in Section 2). However, LIS students are often made to collaborate with their peers within the same course and from the same discipline. In addition, while social media has been used in education in recent years, the use of social media for cross-culture peer review is not normally seen.

In this study, collaboration was carried out between 58 LIS students from Simmons College, Boston and 238 non-LIS students from Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore (described in Section 4). Considering that the students were coming from different countries, different types of schools, different cultures and different age-groups, each student was asked to answer a question pertaining to their expectations from the virtual collaboration.

The research question examined in this study is, "*What are the expectations of students engaging in a cross-cultural virtual collaboration? What might their fears and concerns be?*" As expectations form a key basis for the success of any endeavour, the open-ended responses from both sets of students were analyzed. In this paper, we report the results of this qualitative analysis, and identify a set of cost and benefit factors for both sets of students. The findings have important implications for collaboration literature, teaching and learning, qualitative data analysis, as well as the expectations that LIS and non-LIS students hold for collaboration with each other. Let us now look at the literature review on cross cultural collaboration, peer review, expectations for collaboration and cost-benefit framework.

2. Literature Review

Cross cultural collaboration. In this study, students from U.S. and Singapore collaborate with each other. A number of researchers have studied cross-cultural collaboration in higher education. Besara and Kinsley (2011) and Machin, Harding and Derbyshire (2009) report on collaboration between the library and other campus constituents. Williamson, Archibald and McGregor (2010), Barratt, Nielsen, Desmet and Balthazor (2009) and Haycock (2007) report on collaboration between the librarian and the instructor. Whatley and Bell (2003) concluded that collaborative learning creates a more interdependent learning community arising from the extension of the individual learning communities and their learning resources. The learner is treated as an active participant within the context of a collaborative learning in the virtual classroom (Harasim, Calvert, and Groenboer, 1997; Cogburn and Levinson, 2003). Factors which foster collaborative learning in a virtual distance education include the usage of active and collaborative learning approaches, promotion of meaningful

feedback, opportunities for intergroup collaboration, resource sharing and collaborative writing (Palloff and Pratt, 1999; Cogburn and Levinson, 2003).

Peer review. The student collaboration in this study was to provide virtual peer review on each other's assignments. Peer review is the practice of students providing feedback on each other's assignments, typically before, and sometimes, instead of, being formally graded by the instructor. The merits of peer review, especially social benefits, have been discussed by several researchers (Badger, 2010; Rourke, Mendelsohn and Coleman, 2008). Badger (2010) also cited the beneficial aspects of peer review including establishing accountability for students in making their work more public, and motivating students to prepare their work ahead of time for review by their peers. This helps to improve students' critical thinking, evaluative skills and expression of thoughts and ideas (Smith *et.al.*, 2005; Badger, 2010).

Expectation for collaboration. The major analysis in this study is on student expectations of cross-cultural collaboration for peer review. Fisher and Miller (2008) cite a number of prior research studies on student expectations and course evaluation. These include studies which seek to understand how and why students select universities (Soutar and Turner, 2002), those which reinterpret education as a supply-chain network using an integrated approach (O'Brien and Deans, 1996) and studies on the dynamic nature of the learning environment (Buckley *et al.*, 2004). Fisher and Miller cite further studies which conclude that weekly interface with students in a class can foster positive student outcomes that encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning on a weekly basis (Button and Davies, 1995). End-of-semester course evaluations have been discussed as a method used to understand students' experiences or perceptions of teaching (Marks, 2000). However, such end-of-semester evaluation may not be a useful measure of evaluating teaching and learning as it is too late to improve the course being evaluated for current students or academic staff (Scott *et al.*, 1997) (Fisher and Miller, 2008).

Cost-benefit framework. Hardy (1982)'s cost-benefit framework says that people will want to minimize the cost associated with using information (Agarwal, Xu and Poo, 2011). Most past studies in the disciplines of information science and organizational behavior have largely employed the cost-benefit framework to analyze how seeker's decide on using an information source (Hardy, 1982; Agarwal, Xu and Poo, 2011). Here, the cost could be the difficulty in accessing an information source by a seeker, and the benefit could be knowledge or quality of the source. In analyzing student expectations, a major concern in this study is to see what possible fears and concerns (cost), and what possible benefits did students expect from the collaboration. Hardy (1982)'s cost-benefit framework provides the theoretical lens for this study.

3. Methodology

In qualitative research, the researcher “analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants” (Cresswell, 1998, p.14) and attempts “to capture people’s explanations for how things happen.” (Beck & Manuel, 2008, p.68). In this study, we conduct and report the qualitative content analysis of the expectations data filled out by Simmons and Temasek students in response to the question, “What are your expectations from the [Singapore / U.S.] collaboration?” The Simmons students filled out this data before embarking on the collaboration. For Temasek students, half the students filled this out in the beginning, and the other half reflected on their initial expectations once they had embarked on the collaboration. The Simmons students filled out their expectations on sheets of paper, which were later typed and entered into a spread sheet for analysis. The Temasek students filled out and submitted their responses online.

The authors entered all the data in an Excel sheet and came up with categories based on feelings, fears, etc. Three kinds of coding were carried out – open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding included an initial pass through the data to come up with candidate concepts for categories. After an initial level of analysis, categories were combined into major categories (axial coding). Finally, the focus shifted to core categories (selective coding), those that emerged from open and axial coding as the most important. These are discussed in Section 4. The results of the analysis were compared with the theoretical lens – Hardy (1982)’s cost-benefit framework. Based on this framework, the expectations were divided into perceived costs and perceived benefits emanating from the collaboration, as seen by the Simmons students based in the United States, and the Temasek students based in Singapore. For inter-rater reliability, the authors looked at the analysis of each other’s data (Singapore and U.S.) to see if there were differences in our analyses (summarized in Section 4, Table 1). Let us now briefly review the case.

3. Case Description

In the Fall 2012, the authors decided to collaborate on a research study to explore how incorporating cross-country peer review using Facebook into their respective courses impacts student learning and satisfaction. The collaborators chose to ascertain the challenges, effectiveness and student perceptions of cross-cultural student collaboration for providing peer review on each other’s assignments. The purpose was to gather insights on the pitfalls and triumphs of virtual collaboration – an increasing reality in today’s workplaces – be it libraries, archives, universities or the industry.

The study design was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board / Ethics Committee of the respective schools. The 58 students based in Simmons College, Boston, U.S.A. were Library and Information Science students in a Masters program and in one of two sections of the ‘Technology for Information Professionals’ course. The 238 students based in Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore were much younger students enrolled in the ‘Effective Internet Research’ cross-disciplinary module/course (with students from different diplomas, disciplines and schools at Temasek) offered by the Diploma in

Interactive Media Informatics at the School of Informatics & Information Technology. The 238 students were divided into 10 classes of 22-25 students. Each class had 5 teams of 4-5 students each, making a total of 50 teams. Mostly, 1 (in a few cases, 2) Simmons student interacted with a Temasek team. The nature of student collaboration during a 1-2 week period in November 2012 was largely for the students to provide peer feedback on each other's assignments based on a given set of criteria provided to them. While the Simmons students had to develop a personal web portfolio as part of their course, the Temasek students had to work in teams to come up with Facebook advocacy pages on socially-relevant topics such as human trafficking, social justice, youth depression, mobile gaming, internet addiction, etc. Students were also encouraged to introduce and get to know each other. While the Temasek students evaluated and provided feedback on the websites developed by Simmons students, the Simmons students evaluated and provided feedback on the Facebook advocacy pages developed by Temasek students. All student interaction took place in a designated area inside the Facebook advocacy pages. For Temasek students, the graded Facebook activity constituted 10% of their continual assessment component. For Simmons students, the Singapore collaboration was 5% of their grade for the web portfolio assignment.

The overarching research questions that the larger study sought to answer were: 1) How can social media facilitate mutual peer-assessment and virtual collaboration across cultures? 2) How does reciprocal peer feedback work across students from different countries, cultures, types of schools, disciplines and age-groups? The sets of data gathered in the study were: 1) qualitative written feedback based on initial student expectations from the collaborative peer review exercise before they actually embarked on it; 2) student interaction on Facebook to provide peer review to each other; 3) qualitative reflection on the collaboration after its conclusion; 4) a survey questionnaire based on the perceptions of and satisfaction from the peer-review collaboration exercise; 5) reflection of the two instructors on their collaboration for this project, as well as an analysis of their interaction, documents generated and tools/technologies used. This paper focuses on the analysis of the first data-set.

4. Case Analysis and Findings

Hardy (1982)'s cost-benefit framework says that people will want to minimize the cost and maximize the benefits associated with using information. Using this as our theoretical lens, we come up with analyses of the data based on fear of costs and excitement about potential benefits, as well as categories of what factors constitute costs and what factors constitute benefits for Simmons and Temasek Polytechnic students. The findings throw light on whether the students expected to enjoy and looked forward to the activity, whether they were enthusiastic and motivated to do the collaboration, or if they had concerns on use of Facebook, reliability, knowledge-level and age-groups of peer(s), concerns due to time constraints, etc.

Analysis of Simmons Students' expectations

Let us now look at the expectations of Simmons College students with respect to the collaboration. 52 of the 58 students in two sections of the Technology course filled out the sheets elaborating on their expectations.

Cost factors identified. In the students' cost-benefit calculus with respect to the Singapore collaboration, the cost factors identified are listed below. It is to be noted that each student might have identified either one or more than cost factor. Given in brackets is the number of times each factor was identified by the 52 students. The factors are sorted from the most cited to the least cited:

1. **Evaluating unknown work / my feedback not needed or not good enough** (18). *"I'm not sure what to expect from their work" "As for seeing their work, it'll be interesting, I'm sure, but I'm not sure how much I really need to provide feedback to them. That said, given the nature of their assignment, perhaps an American perspective would be useful to them, so I don't mind doing it."*
2. **Low quality or unhelpful feedback (due to differences in age, assignments or language)** (10). *"I'm not at all sure what we'll get out of collaboration with such young students." "...but it seems like our assignments are very different." "I do not know whether these comments will be helpful or constructive, as I have no frame of reference to draw from."*
3. **Not being good/technical enough / failing to impress** (7). *"I'm a little worried about the cultural differences & reactions. Will they like it? Will they think it's technical enough?"*
4. **Interaction with unknown people/culture** (6). *"I'm a rather introverted, socially awkward person so I'm never a fan of having to interact socially, especially with people I don't know." "I would rather have more peer reviews with classmates."*
5. **Possible negative feedback/reactions** (5). *"For whatever reason, I have it in my head that I'm going to get really negative feedback from them." "I get nervous sharing my work because I want people to like it, so I think that's where my concern is."*
6. **Additional thing to do** (4). *"...it's just another thing to do in addition to the frustration of building the whole website."*
7. **Use of Facebook** (1). *"I have never used Facebook before, so I am nervous about that."*

Benefit factors identified. The benefit factors identified by Simmons students were (sorted from most cited to least cited):

1. **Feedback on my assignment / will use it to make my page better** (34). *"I'm hoping to get helpful and informative feedback about my site." "I think they'll give some feedback on my page and I'll try to use it to make my page better." "...thoughtful feedback from a unique perspective on the navigation, content, and aesthetics of my website"*

2. **Cross-cultural/ country/ age interaction / exchange of ideas / varying and unique perspectives on each other's work** (30). *“I know our distance geographically and culturally will make for varying and unique perspectives on each others' work. Also they are a different age group than us, which will also add some interesting dynamics to our learning/interest levels on the other's work.”* *“Singapore is a nation I know little about. They have a different worldview and it will be interesting to get to work with them.”*
3. **Getting to see their work** (29). *“I am excited to ...see what they've created for their project.”* *“I do expect it to be interesting to see a globally important issue being addressed from a perspective that may differ from our typical national discourse.”* *“I see it as an opportunity to see what students from another part of the world are interested in academically (though I don't know how much of their assignment was self-directed and how much was ...designed by the teacher)”*
4. **Probable good experience** (8). *“It will probably be a good experience overall”* *“I think it will be a new experience and I hope it will be a good new experience.”*
5. **Personal sense of identification** (2). *“It will also be fun for me because I have a 16 1/2 year old and a 19 year old who are also on [Facebook] and have definite thoughts, opinions and ideas about world + social issues. I wonder if there will be some commonality between the way they (the Singapore group) and my daughters represent themselves and their ideas on Facebook.”* *“I don't know how often I will have to do this in my career, but my stepmother works out of Boston with a team of people working in Japan. It will be a good practice of collaborating distantly.”*
6. **Solace from low quality of peer's work** (1). *“Will they like it? Will they think it's technical enough. But, their webpage looks pretty unprofessional, so maybe I have nothing to be worried about.”*

Affective components / feelings exhibited by Simmons Students. Figure 1 shows the feelings exhibited by Simmons students with respect to the collaboration.

- About half the students (51%) were either interested or enthusiastic/excited about the collaboration (*“I'm really interested in this part of the assignment. I'm kind of excited to be communicating and working with students from another country. I'm hoping this will work out well and be fun to do.”*).
- A quarter of the students was indifferent and had no expectations (*“I have almost no expectations. I think they'll give some feedback on my page and I'll try to use it to make my page better.”*).
- 10% of the students exhibited feelings of disdain towards the collaboration (*“I think it is going to be a waste of time. Sorry. I would rather have more peer reviews with classmates.”* *“I'm not at all sure what we'll get out of collaboration with such young students.”*).

- The rest were either worried, nervous or scared (10%) (“*I get nervous sharing my work*” “*I’m a little worried about the cultural differences and reactions.*”) or both nervous and excited at the same time (4%) (“*I have never used Facebook before, so I am nervous about that. I am excited to meet some new people and see what they’ve created...*”).

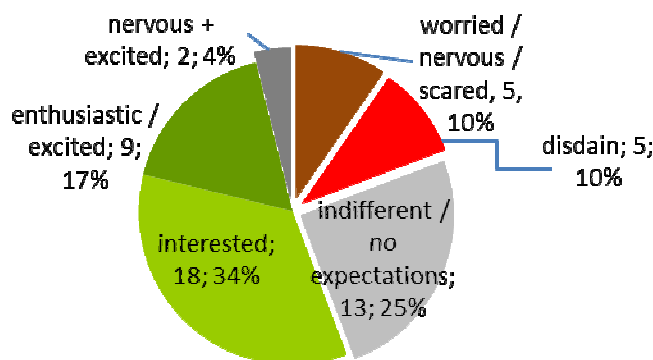


Figure 1. Feelings exhibited by Simmons students

Here, feelings of being interested or excited can be categorized as positive or identification with benefits in the students’ cost-benefit calculation about the collaboration. The feelings of disdain or worry can be categorized as negative or identification with costs. The feelings of indifference and combination of excitement and nervousness straddle the boundaries of cost and benefit.

Analysis of Temasek students’ expectations

Let us now look at the expectations of Temasek Polytechnic students with respect to the collaboration. Here, the affective components / feelings are not analyzed separately but included in the cost-benefit calculation of students. 190 of the 238 students in ten sections of the Effective Internet Research course filled out their expectations online. Of these, 96 students filled out their expectations before they embarked on the collaborative peer review. 94 students had already started on the reciprocal peer review exercise and filled out their expectations retrospectively. Their comments included some reflections from the collaboration as well.

Cost factors identified. In the Temasek students’ cost-benefit calculus with respect to the collaboration with U.S. students, the cost factors identified are listed below. Again, each student might have identified one or more cost factors listed below. Given in brackets is the number of times each factor was identified by the 190 students. The factors (which include both the feelings and the fears of the students) are sorted from the most cited to the least cited:

1. **Confusion / anxiety** (32). *“..I was kind of worried at first...because I didn’t know if it would work well.” “I was actually quite fearful but also excited upon this USA collaboration.” “I had mixed feelings and was confused before going into this collaboration as it sounded at first quite tedious but at the same time interested in the collaboration as it required using a social network media to communicate.” “I was confused and rather anxious about the outcome.”*
2. **Fear of communication issues** (16). *“I was afraid I would not be able to communicate well with our USA counterparts.” “I was expecting to learn how to conduct myself well in an online collaboration - how to get my ideas across concisely over the web, and how to present them in a friendly and engaging way.” “Will we be able to communicate well?” “...honestly speaking, I was rather scared that I may not communicate well with them as I have never spoken to people overseas. You know the sorts, Singlish slipping out unknowingly leading to them not understanding me.” “However I am quite worry that the USA student was not able to understand the comment I leave for the individual links that I posted as I am from Asian country, as compared to them whom are from the America, our language standard will definitely differ by a large margin.”*
3. **Possible misunderstandings due to cultural difference** (9). *“..the thinking and working style is different because of the country difference.” “Will we have misunderstandings due to culture differences?” “I also hoped that he/she would be friendly so that the collaboration would not be awkward.” “I was wondering if we could work well together because of culture differences. And most importantly, I am a shy person [that] doesn’t talk a lot. This has become a “worrying” factor for me on this project.”*
4. **Scepticism** (3). *“I was sceptical about what the students will think and comment about our Facebook page and I actually thought that they would be tense and hostile, and would criticize our Facebook page if it isn’t done properly (since they are university students and they might have higher expectations).”*

Benefit factors identified. The benefit factors identified by the 190 Temasek students were (sorted from the most cited to the least cited):

1. **Learning new skills / personal growth / future research / better research skills** (131). *“My expectation in this entire learning journey is to learn new things from US students. This includes learning from their general knowledge, personal experiences and ...thoughts.”*
2. **Getting to discuss / interact / receive feedback** (115). *“I was expecting to have some interactions with them” “...I felt that this programme would be a meaningful one. Allowing each ...other to provide serious ...yet truthful reviews about your page, it would be much of a help as to what we can improve...”*
3. **Enthusiasm / interest / happiness / creativity / curiosity** (82). *“I feel excited about the collaboration ... because this is my first time chatting with someone through Facebook without knowing the real identity...” “... I’m*

*already feeling excited to connect with the college students in the US”
“...really looking forward to it.” “...experience what it was like to have an
American peer interacting with us.”*

4. **Making new friends / meet new people** (37). *“I expected us to learn about their culture, their school and get to know more about them as well as to make friends with them through Facebook chat.” “I had never chat[ted] with students from overseas before, therefore, I thought of making friends with him/her.”*

Apart from expectations, the Temasek group that had already started on the collaboration also included some preliminary reflections:

Cost factors.

1. **Disappointment** (8). *“I expected the USA student’s website to be not so good, as our task is to comment and critique on their website.”
“Though I was a little disappointed with the design and layout of his webpage as I thought he could have been more creative, it was still a fun and fruitful experience.”*

Benefit factors.

1. **Being impressed** (14). *“I had high expectations of the website that I was supposed to review as the site would be created by someone from overseas and I thought I could get an insight of the culture over there.” “I would expect a good quality work from him as they were taught how to create a website, as we were as well.” “...after seeing [her] comments about our page, I am amazed how deep and how serious she was with regards to our page.”*
2. **Being inspired** (10). *“The website also inspired me with ideas for improvement for our Facebook page.” “This collaboration opened my eyes to what other student elsewhere had chances to, it showed me their capabilities and their imaginative power.” “The collaboration with Simon’s College students is a very innovative and creative way for us to communicate with students from USA. Making use of the internet and advance technology, we are able to interact with someone 9511.35 miles away with just a click on your mouse!”*
3. **Being jealous** (2) [this is classified as a benefit due to the positive emotions attached]. *“I was quite jealous of her as she also had a chance to have a Master of Science in Library and Information Sciences ...unlike most of us here in Singapore who are probably going to end up in a dead end desk job for the rest of our lives working it out till we are 63 with old and brittle bone.....only to be able to take back our CPF [Central Provident Fund] money bits a time...” “I envied her with her humble ways - at least she has a life.”*

4. **Extending collaborations into the future** (9). “..it would be more enriching if we could continue our collaboration even when the project is over.”

Discussion. Let us now compare the cost and benefit factors identified by the Simmons and Temasek students, and also reconcile the two sets of codings to ensure inter-rater reliability.

Table 1. Cost and Benefit factors identified by Simmons and Temasek students

Cost factors	
<i>Simmons College (n=52)</i>	<i>Temasek Polytechnic (n=190)</i>
Evaluating unknown work / my feedback not needed or not good enough (18)	
Additional thing to do (4)	
Low quality or unhelpful feedback (due to differences in age, assignments or language) (10)	
Interaction with unknown people/culture (6)	Possible misunderstandings due to cultural difference (9)
Indifferent / no expectations (13)	
Disdain (5)	Scepticism (3) Disappointment (8)
Worried / nervous / scared (5)	Confusion / anxiety (32)
Not being good/technical enough / failing to impress (7)	Fear of communication issues (16)
Possible negative feedback/reactions (5)	
Use of Facebook (1)	
Benefit factors	
<i>Simmons College (n=52)</i>	<i>Temasek Polytechnic (n=190)</i>
Feedback on my assignment / will use it to make my page better (34)	Getting to discuss / interact / receive feedback (115)
Cross-cultural/ country/ age interaction / exchange of ideas / varying and unique perspectives on each other's work (30)	Making new friends / meet new people (37)
Getting to see their work (29)	Learning new skills / personal growth / future research / better research skills (131)
Probable good experience (8)	Being impressed (14) inspired (10) jealous (2); Extending collaborations into the future (9)
Personal sense of identification (2)	

Solace from low quality of peer's work (1)	
Interested (18)	Enthusiasm / interest / happiness /
Enthusiastic / excited (9)	creativity / curiosity (82)
Excited & nervous (2)	

Table 1 summarizes the cost and benefit factors identified by Simmons and Temasek students with respect to their collaboration for peer review. Categories which are similar to each other are put together in the same row.

For both sets of students, the benefits identified were more than the costs. Thus, in their cost-benefit calculus, the students entered the collaboration largely with a positive bent of mind. Both sets of students were clear that the primary benefit was to receive peer feedback on their respective assignments, as well as experience cross-cultural interaction. About half the students in both schools exhibited excitement and enthusiasm for the collaboration. The Temasek students exhibited much more interest in learning from the Simmons students, acquiring new skills for personal growth and improving their research skills. This might have been because the Simmons students were older and pursuing Masters degrees. Looking at the cost factors, a number of students in both countries exhibited feelings of worry, nervousness and anxiety. While the Simmons students were worried about not being technical enough in developing their websites, the Temasek students were worried about their English language skills when communicating with the Simmons students. Other worries of Simmons students included evaluating unknown work, and getting feedback that was not useful enough.

5. Conclusions and Implications

In this study, we started with a simple question analyzing the expectations that students separated by distance, nationalities, age, types of degrees and assignments had from the exercise of collaborating with each other for reciprocal peer review on each other's assignments. The qualitative analysis showed that Hardy (1982)'s cost-benefit framework largely held in this case. A set of cost and benefit factors are identified for both sets of students.

Future work will report the qualitative analyses of others sets of data, including 1) the Facebook interaction; 2) student reflections on the collaborative peer review exercise; and 3) the quantitative data provided through a survey questionnaire, as well as map the entire process of collaboration for action research. We expect these analyses to be highly interesting and one that provides rich insights from students.

The study has unique implications for education programs in Library and Information Science and for academic and other libraries, by providing a model for cross-country virtual collaboration. Library and Information Science students, as well as other students, will see the benefits of knowledge sharing, effectively replacing competition with collaboration. Upon graduating, students carry this sense of collaboration (not just with service providers, but with library

users as well) into the libraries, archives, museums and other information centers that they work in, helping create healthy work environments.

The biggest benefit though, maybe in breaking preconceived notions and barriers. As one Temasek Polytechnic student reflected after the collaboration, “Having been my first time collaborating with an overseas student, I was confused and rather anxious about the outcome. Will we be able to communicate well? Will we have misunderstandings due to culture differences?...Surprisingly, this collaboration went well and brought me insights about the lifestyle of another country. We merely exchanged a few posts, yet there were many things I could infer from. Maybe our collaboration partner was more humble and down to earth, or maybe the United States is not as fancy and rich as I had imagined. ... I was surprised that she did not own a smart phone It was rare and interesting to find that in this ever evolving technology advanced world, there were still students not having a smart phone or going after the latest trending game. ... She has a fancy towards art and reading, something that most of the Singaporean students hardly take notice of anymore. Although we have the latest smart phones, yet I find that we are lacking in what we once had interest in before technology conquered us. I envied her with her humble ways - at least she has a life.” Another student wrote, “It turned out to be an eye-opening and enlightening experience which I would treasure dearly.”

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