

+Teambuilding in the Time of COVID 19: A zoom play

Before we begin I would like to ask our audience to kindly turn off your video and mute your sound. Thank-you for your co-operation.

June: “Good afternoon and welcome to the York University Libraries production of Teambuilding in the time of COVID-19. The performers in today’s zoom play are:”

[Each performer says their own name and turns off video]

Alexandra - Staff: Alexandra.

Dat - Tech Support: Dat.

David C - Narrator: David C.

David N - Staff: David N.

Genny - Staff: Genny.

Kalina - Facilitator: Kalina.

Tanya - Manager: Tanya.

Trevor - Coordinator: Trevor.

Veronica - Staff: Veronica.

June - Staff: “Dat is providing our technical support, and myself, June. We are all from different branches, departments, and campuses, and we represent a variety of roles within YorkU Libraries.

So without further ado, here we go!”

[Play Sound - I Vow To Thee]

David C: **The Perfect Library** by David Clink

Imagine, if you will, a perfect library
where the reading room is lit by the soft
pulsing lights of fireflies
& the wood that furnishes it
is from exquisite trees felled by mountain men
with bulging biceps.

...

Where you can find dictionaries
of made-up words,
the histories and alternate histories
of things that never happened.

...

Where the reference desk is staffed
by ancient librarians with leathery wings
who can tell you about the Big Bang
& everything since because they were there.
Where you can find books
smaller than a fingernail & larger than a bus.
A perfect library where the books
read other books
& join book clubs, arguing what they're about,
& when they're done they shelve themselves.

[Air Siren Sound - 10 seconds]

[Act 1 - Scene 1]

[The Dean Locks Down the Library]

David C: “The Dean Locks Down the Library.
On March 17, 2:30 pm, the Ontario government announced that the province would be in a lockdown at midnight: all places of employment would be closed. The Dean of Libraries acted quickly on this provincial directive.”

David N: “In response to recent developments, all York University Libraries are closing effective immediately. All doors will be closed and library users will be asked to leave.

All staff are asked to leave by 4pm today. Staff shifts that start later will be directed not to come in.

Managers will work with each of you to implement working from home protocols which will remain in effect during this period. The immediate priority is to prepare for working at home.

Please stay safe everyone.

Regards,

Joy Kirchner: The Dean of Libraries."

[Act 1 - Scene 2]

[The Big Ask]

David C:

"The Big Ask.

The swift closure of the province, and the libraries, required a major change in how services were delivered at York University. Tanya, manager of Access Services, was put into a difficult situation. She needed to organize expanded teams to provide services in new ways. Her worry was well-founded: there were many obstacles ahead."

Tanya:

"March 18th. Wow, that was sudden! Here I am at home, miles away from all the people who report to me. The administration has said that everyone must work from home. How am I going to do this? They are in all parts of the city! Do they have computers? Do they have internet connections? Even if they do, I can barely use Zoom and many of them have NEVER used it!

This will be freaking everyone out! What work

can they do from home? My team staffs in-person service desks! Here we are, in the middle of a restructure, where I am tasked with de-siloing library branches, and now everyone is in their own little silo!

You know, maybe I should talk to the teaching librarians in my division about all this training that will be needed? I can usually twist Dana and Kalina's arms

Hey Kalina, did Dana talk to you about trialing a fireside chat with my Access Services team next week?"

David C: "In the early days of the lockdown, the libraries did not have access to the Human Resource's Development office. Any support Tanya needed would have to come from librarians and staff. No-one in the libraries had significant facilitation experience. And people were struggling to figure things out in their own lives! One of those people was Kalina, a renowned luddite and technophobe, trying to make sense of Zoom and the Teams environment."

Kalina: "April 1. Geez Louise, Tanya has made a huge ask. I am not a trained facilitator – I am a LIBRARIAN.

How do I do this? Tanya really wants her staff to be comfortable working from home. Where do I get info on this? How do I organize the sessions? I am no expert!

Maybe I can ask people to watch a video, act upon a suggestion or tip from it and then we can talk about the experience. I could set up some ground rules for the group – that seems like something every FACILITATOR does.

My ground rules. Everyone must:

- 1) watch the video
- 2) try out a tip
- 3) share their experience
- 4) listen without interrupting.

Now, which videos? Where do I find them?

There's a goldmine of stuff in LinkedIn Learning:
how to set up your home office
how to establish a routine
how to communicate work-life boundaries with your family; and so on.

I can call the series V-A-C: View, Act and Converse.

I think this can work! But I am so scared of Zoom.”

[Act 2 - Scene 1]

[Isolation in Ontario]

David C: “Isolation in Ontario.
In Ontario, the lockdown was strict. People were told that, by law, they were not to leave their home except for basic needs: food, prescription drugs and alcohol. The contrast was stark between the day before and the day after the lockdown. The world was standing still and so were all the people in it. Including Veronica, a long-serving member of the Access Services Department. She journaled her experience.”

Veronica: “March 25, 2020. It has been about a week since the campus closure and the university has us working from home - WFH - a new acronym.

Finding it challenging already using the dining room table and a folding chair (with a cushion) as my new workstation area. This set-up is not ideal, but it is the best I can do for now. Lucky

too that the library has loaned me a computer to use.

Received an email from management asking the staff for feedback on our new experience working from home. New experience ...well everything is new at this point. Most of my neighbours are off from work. Local schools closed so there is no sound coming into the house from children playing outdoors. Very few vehicles on the road. It looks like a ghost town outside all that is missing is the tumbleweed. This-has-happened-so-fast.

I want to know how are people coping with all of this. What are my colleagues from the library doing about a work area if they do not have an office in their home? How do you share one computer? How do they get the work done? What about their children? What about caring for other members in your family and working in the same space?

Mostly wanting to know what will it take to get things done like before?

Who knows?

Wishing everyone well..."

David C: Veronica's sense of isolation was felt by many members of the Access Services staff. Alexandra, a mom of a five-year old, was feeling the stress. Between work and supervising her child's schooling, COVID restrictions were taking their toll. Though their in-person working lives did not intersect often -- Alexandra and Veronica—feeling the isolation, connect by phone.

[Play ringtone sound – 2 Rings]

Alexandra: [phone ringing]

Veronica: “Hello?”

Alexandra: “Hi Veronica, it's Alexandra. How's it going?”

Veronica: “Hi Alexandra. I'm ok. Working from home is challenging, but I'm starting to adapt. How about you?”

Alexandra: “Yeah, it's been crazy for me too. I'm starting to find little moments though. Today I'm going to Kalina's VAC series discussion about managing our energy. I'm actually looking forward to it.”

Veronica: “Oh yeah? Have you been going regularly? I have been sort of on the fence about it...”

Alexandra: “I hear you. I was skeptical at first too. The idea of watching a LinkedIn video when I'm already juggling so much didn't appeal, but Kalina is so down to earth, and everyone's been sharing interesting things about their lives. And we laugh a lot! Which I need right now!”

Veronica: “Is it a big group?”

Alexandra: “Different people come to the sessions, but a core group has kind of formed and it's been good to see colleagues on a regular basis.”

Veronica: “That sounds nice. Maybe I will give it a try.”

[Play sound – Daughter's cries]

Alexandra: “I hope you do! [daughter's voice can be heard yelling "mummy"!]

Geez, sorry Veronica, I've got to run, but I hope to see you soon.”

Veronica: “Take care Alexandra!”

[Characters hang up]

[Act 2 - Scene 2]

[Isolation to Community]

David C:

“Isolation to Community.

Kalina, now the facilitator of the View-Act-Converse series, was experiencing the highs and lows of doing something out of her comfort zone. And while some of the LinkedIn videos were a success, others were kind of “meh” for some people. Let's check in to see how a luddite handles Zoom. And how far-flung co-workers get behind the team.”

[Everyone is wearing their head bands and turns on their video. Stay on video throughout scene.]

Alexandra / June / David N / Genny / Trevor / Kalina

Sound / Music: No sound and no music

Kalina put mute on before this scene starts.

Alexandra: “Kalina, you're on mute.”

June: "My internet is slow."

David N: "Am I frozen? I think I'm frozen."

Genny: **[Video off initially]** "Can you see me?"

Trevor: "Where is Dat, I don't see him here on Zoom."

Kalina: "Hello everyone. It's great to see you. Just like last time, we are going to start with some stretches. Are you ready? Let's start with our arms and shoulders."

Everyone with their headbands follow along to demo.

Kalina: "Right, now let's get these headbands off and get to work!"

"This week we watched Heidi Hanna's "How to Manage Overwhelm." I asked everyone to reflect on these two questions: 1) which part of Heidi's video did you find most helpful? 2) what tip did you try and how did it go?"

Genny, let's start with you today. Over to you."

Genny: "Unfortunately, I wasn't a fan of this video because it was too general to be very useful so I was not inspired to try one of her tips. However, I love our discussions and I want to hear what others think. It's also great to see everyone instead of just emailing."

Kalina: "June, what did you think?"

June: "Sorry, I didn't watch the videos because of the book lockers. Although, I didn't get around to them, I thought I would join in for the conversation ."

Kalina: "No worries. Trevor, over to you."

Trevor: "I really liked the passion Heidi Hanna showed for her topic. And I tried the suggestion of listening to calming music when stressed. It really helped."

Kalina: "Alexandra, were you able watch the video and act on a tip?"

Alexandra: "I liked the simple doable strategies that she offered to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Things like breathing and learning it is okay to take strategic distractions to clear your head. Overall I found this video really helpful."

Kalina: "Thanks everyone for your thoughts and observations. I am looking forward to seeing you at the next session. Take care."

[Act 3 - Scene 1]

[Rolodex of Achievements]

David C:

“Rolodex of Achievements.

Members of the Reference Services and Access Services Departments met every week over zoom to talk about their experience of watching the videos and acting upon a tip. The regular meetings were an opportunity to talk about how to manage the lockdown personally and professionally. The camaraderie developed in these sessions built the team! So much could be accomplished with people working together for a common purpose. The number of successful projects is impressive!”

**June / Tanya / Trevor / David C / Genny /
Veronica / Alexandra**

**[Come on scene when you say your lines. Stay
on video until end of scene.]**

Tanya:

“I think this is working. My team seems to be embracing these changes and forging ahead with so many projects. Pan–library teams are tackling the creation of new services for our users in this endless pandemic.”

[Play Sound – clock ticking – throughout scene]

[Tone is rushed, breathless]

Veronica: “March 30th. Okay -- we are up and running with a local chat in addition to our consortial chat service. Check.”

June: “April 29th. We need to get books to people! At least some of our 2.5 million volumes! Getting these to students, staff, and faculty is urgent! Between the workflow flowchart and the book distribution list we will figure this out. Check.”

Genny: “May 19th. Our partner libraries are closed for interlibrary loans, we're sourcing electronic resources like we never have before. Check.”

Alexandra: “July 23rd. The external book return is finally in place outside the Student Centre. Check.”

[Veronica swings around in her chair, faces screen]

Veronica: “August 5th. Library Accessibility Services didn't do too badly in the summer term. This coming Fall-Winter? We'll be all right. Check”

[Veronica with thumbs up]

David N: “Sept 2nd. After 9 weeks of training our Access Services team is on our local chat service too! Check.”

**All Characters:
big sigh and we all wipe our brows**

**[Act 3 - Scene 2]
[Tough talk about lockers]**

David C: “On September 21 there was some **Tough Talk about Lockers**. The new relationships made it easier to work through the difficult parts of implementing a new service. Two coordinators talk about the glitches.”

Trevor: “This is so great. The curbside lockers are up and running. Well Mostly.”

June: “There are some issues. Just a few, insignificant things.”

Trevor: “Phew! You had me worried for a moment! What is wrong with the lockers?”

June: "First, once you've scanned in an item into a locker, there is no searching capability, or viewing capability, so we don't actually know what was scanned into the locker, after we have saved the locker."

Trevor: "I guess we must figure out a workaround. Is that it?"

June: "No. It gets worse. There are issues with patrons requesting more than one volume in a multi-volume set. The system thinks it is a duplicate request."

Trevor: "I guess we must figure out another workaround. Is that it?"

June: "No. It gets worse. If someone cancels one of their holds, there is no way of deleting the one book from their locker. Also, the locker program sometimes does not sign out books to a patron, so these books are still listed as being on hold, even though the patron..."

Trevor: "June, it's okay! We can figure this out with the vendor. You've got to love technology. Check."

Tanya: “October 13th. Finally ... the pace is not so frantic now ... people have actually been asking for another round of videos with Kalina ...”

[Act 4 - Scene 1]

[Kalina's Proposal]

David C: “Kalina's Proposal.
The View-Act-Converse series finished in early fall. People were much more comfortable working from home and working as a team. After the rush of the fall, Kalina and David N had a chance Zoom conversation. Despite her periodic zoom mishaps, she did enjoy the meetings and the connections with people. Ideas started percolating. Kalina knew David N had a film studies background and a love of movies. This was a chance to work together and pass along some of the stress and JOY of zoom conversations. She emailed Tanya.

Kalina: “Hi Tanya. This is hot on the heels of my conversation with David N. I want to propose something and see what you think. Winter is going to be tough for some people, especially those who will not be back on campus, including me. I was thinking that maybe we could do a video series on diversity in Canada.

David and I could find shorter streaming videos or TVO stuff on diversity. Or people could recommend something.

And then we would talk about it as a group.

If I get the OK from you, David N and I can figure out something that is workable for everyone.

Thanks for considering it.

Take care, Kalina”

[Act 4 - Scene 2]

[David N’s Dark Night of the Soul]

David C:

“David N’s Dark Night of the Soul. One of the curious elements of the lockdown was how a sense of "what's my job" changed over time. People did open themselves up to new challenges. David N, in the Science Library, was one such person. The night owl and solo worker was now being asked to pair up! Little did Kalina know that he had some BIG doubts. It was going to push him out of his comfort zone.”

[Play Sound – Film Noir music 34 sec]

David N:

"No good deed goes unpunished. You let slip to a librarian about liking their sessions, next thing you know you're helping run the next one. I don't understand. You don't get to sit in the cockpit for saying a nice word about the pilot's flying. But that's the way it's been since Mother Nature placed a rush recall on our comfy little day-to-day. What do I know about discussion groups and guided video series? What I *do* know is this deal sounds like a headache.

See, I've always been the evening guy here. I'm the sucker who sticks it out to closing time with one student worker, the poor sap who finds books and fields questions at an hour when anyone with any sense is at home asleep in bed: 10 P.M. My crowd is the late-night studiers, the night-before essay writers, that one guy who always wore sandals and took them off at the computer station to clip his toenails.

Most of the day staff probably couldn't pick me out of a line-up, so when it comes to collaborating with a librarian? From a completely different department off my usual beat? It feels like a mismatch, like shelving a monograph with a Dewey Decimal number in your LC collection. Sure, it might be the right subject area; there

might even be an open spot for it. But brother, that book don't belong there, and it knows it."

David C: "After some conversation, the pair decided to find short Canadian films or documentaries that had a spectrum of characters of various ethnicities, abilities, sexualities, ages. So, how to organize the series? Since the country is so big, they framed it as "The Canadian Series" visiting one province or territory each session and meeting a diversity of people."

[Act 4 - Scene 3]
[Trevor Has Wanderlust]

David C: "Trevor Has Wanderlust. The Canadian Series did not run every week. And there could be a long gap between meetings. Those drawn to the series found it a bright light in a sometimes dull and grey Canadian winter. Trevor, David N's supervisor, was one of those people who looked forward to the next virtual trip!"

Trevor: "David N, great work on the Video Series! I've been hearing that people really enjoy it!"

David N: "So I hear. I'm enjoying it too! I never thought I'd get to bring my passion for film to work."

Trevor: "It's been a while since we were in Nova Scotia. When are we going to Quebec? It would be great to see something new. That's what I do with my Sunday afternoons these days -- watch a video on a Canadian province or territory!"

David N: "I have some possibilities, but Kalina and I always decide on the videos together. We'll announce the titles to the group soon."

Trevor: "Okay, I am looking forward to checking out La Belle Provence!"

David N: "Get ready, we have the Quebecois Elvis lined up for some Rock 'N' Roll! I think you're going to love it."

[Act 4 - Scene 4]

[Genny Goes Cross Country]

David C: "Genny Goes Cross Country.
Genny, a movie buff, found the Canadian Series

much more enjoyable than View-Act-Converse. “

[Play postcards throughout Genny’s part.]

Genny:

“I love how this series has become a film group! We are now watching a curated set of short films highlighting Canada's diversity. I never would have found these films on my own. David & Kalina ensure that our time isn't wasted because they choose quality films from the library's collection.”

The discussion also brings out the varied viewpoints, backgrounds, interests, and personalities of my colleagues – something that would not have emerged at work because I rarely see many members of the group. I feel like I've come to know my colleagues on a more personal level. Finally, it is rare to have a chance to talk about ideas and our series provides a forum for this. How often do we get a chance to watch and talk about documentaries in general, let alone at work?”

[Act 5 - Scene 1]

[The Two T’s Talk Triumph]

David C: "The Two T's Talk Triumph.
So much happened over the course of one year! Tanya and Trevor flip through a scrapbook created by their team. The pandemic, while causing hardship, also brought the best out of people. Tanya and Trevor, the manager and the coordinator, are proud of their team and all they accomplished.

ACTION: PPT slideshow turned on.

Tanya: "This pandemic has proved so interesting. People are really enjoying working together!"

Trevor: "You know, I am all about people and I think it's great that we now have a sense of community! We've connected all these branches together ..."

Tanya: "Did you get that email from Anica where she talks about being part of a stronger, more connected team? And managing to stay relatively sane at the same time?"

Trevor: "And the emails from Anna and Susan? – I had no idea they were so proud of our locker service. Also, Janice was talking about how ironic

it is that it took a pandemic for her to feel less isolated in her work in the library.”

Tanya: “But, you know, we are not at the end of COVID nor at the end of needing to re-think and re-imagine how we deliver our services. And looking forward, keeping all the remote services WHILE increasing our on-campus in-person services!

That's a big ask... And there are issues we still haven't solved – physical course reserves and access to non-circulating materials. And I'm worried how staff are going to feel about returning to campus.

Will we return to our old ways? Siloed and not talking to staff in other branches? I don't want that! How can I ensure there are still opportunities to get together, know each other better, and keep growing? AAAaaagh!

Tanya starts pulling her hair out.

Trevor: "Tanya, snap out of it! This Covid experience has made our team confident and prepared for anything. It doesn't matter what the new normal is. We got this!"

[Play sound - Sheep May Safely Graze]

David C : “This is the library you dream about,
the perfect library,
...
& if you finally find yourself there
you will discover the perfect place,
...
where you have a view on the garden,
the natural light finding its way in,
& there, in a glass case, you will find
the first library card you were issued,
the first book you signed out as a child,
& you are there with your parents again,
the place where you could
barely see over the counter
& you are glad you finally have a chance
to thank them
for taking you to your first library,
the perfect library,
& you realize, this is where you have been,
all along.”

[Continue Sound – I Vow To Thee]

[for five seconds or shorter]

[end at a logical place, but max five seconds]

David C: “End scene! And play!”

[Continue Sound – I Vow To Thee]

June: Thank-you all for listening to our play. Please turn your cameras on and unmute yourself for any questions.

[Stop Sound – I Vow To Thee]

[All players come back on scene]