

Bridget Butler

Interviewer: So, Bridget, why don't you tell us who you are and what you do for a living?

Bridget: My name is Bridget Butler, and I'm a Conservation Education Specialist at the ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center, which is located on the waterfront in Burlington, Vermont, on the shore of Lake Champlain.

Interviewer: What is it that you are doing up there that is a good example of 21st century skills, in either how you're using them, or the alternative, how you're getting people to come to your project to use them?

Bridget: I think one of the biggest barriers to using social media has been that it just that seems so big, that there's a lot to it, that you need high-tech gadgets and big computers to be able to participate. I think what ECHO has been really good about modeling through the Voices for the Lake project is that you can use existing social media tools. We use Twitter and Facebook, and we went to where the people were. Both of those tools are being used by huge volumes of people. So we used those tools specifically because we knew that there were already people who were already there that knew how to use them.

In the project that we designed to get people to participate in telling us about their stories about how they connected about the lake, we then mirrored those same actions that people were already comfortable taking online whether it's sharing a photo or sending a link, typing out an e-mail to someone. So that's how we built our structure for people to be able to tell stories.

We went one step further in trying to show people that it was easy to learn some of these skills and I was the model for that. I didn't have a cell phone when we started this project. I had dabbled a little in Facebook, a little bit in podcasting, so I kind of became the measure for that. If I can do it, if I can learn how to do it, I can teach somebody else how to do it. So I was very close to the learner population that were novices. So we showed people through some digital storytelling workshops how to use Flip Cameras, which are very common now, and affordable, which was huge. And also use software that's pretty common on most computers, so, if you had a PC, we showed you how to use Windows Movie Maker. If you had a Mac, we showed you how to use iMovie. So we used very basic software and very basic tools to engage people, draw them in, and show them that they could be a part of this, too.