How might internal and external attributes impact your approaches to project management? (examples: resource availability, clarity of objectives, etc.)

In any project there are going to be external and internal constraints and opportunities that come up, and reading those is really important. But just acknowledging them on the front end is important with everybody who's a player. For instance, with the projects I most contextualize here, the projects where I'm working with new instructional designers who are students in a program, one of our biggest external constraints is we have 14 weeks to complete a full project, from beginning to end. And that's largely inflexible, we have to work within that boundary. That introduces very real constraints on the amount we can agree to do and the complexity of the project we can take on. And we have to negotiate that on the front end. And we have to guess right on the front end. And so, we may not get it entirely right. But with most projects, we usually have bailout points. We'll look at projects that we can say, "If everything goes perfectly, we can get this far. But if it doesn't go perfectly, we'll at least be able to deliver this." And then what's the fallback position, two or three steps up. So that we know that we can deliver a product to the client. But that's an external constraint, we have to work within it. The external constraints of resources are also always tricky to navigate. We're working with non-profit organizations, often, these organizations that don't have a lot of money. By definition, they don't have a lot of money. And it's one of the reasons we want to take on these projects, because instructional design has a gift to give, that's larger than just the corporate kinds of opportunities that people have. And we want to make sure that people understand that there's a social reason for what we do, a societal good that we want to perform as well. But that means that we're working with organizations that don't have a lot of money. So, we have to be really careful with limited funding. And we have to often be clever and do workarounds. We have to MacGyver a lot of stuff along the way to see that people get things. So, for instance, I'll give you an example. We were doing one project that involved an entire collection of historical slides that we wanted to turn into a database for a client, a searchable database for them. And it included 10,000 or so slides. That means a huge database, and wonderful resource. We didn't have them scanned. The client came to us and said, "Yeah, here they are, they're in boxes." Well, we could see the entire 14 weeks being taken up with scanning slides 10,000 slides, so we had to negotiate on the front end with that organization to work with yet another organization that had some personnel available, who could turn those into digital forms for us to begin with, so that we had something to work with that then we could massage and turn into the database they wanted. And we didn't really waste our time with all the grunt work of scanning 10,000 slides. With Internal stuff, one of the trickiest things I have with every team I've ever worked with, whether it's in a corporate setting or in an academic setting, is we break into teams and we break into tasks. People are doing particular things that feed the whole project. One of the internal needs that I have as a project manager is to make sure that everybody continually comes back to the whole project. Not getting a particular focus on a particular little piece of the project and forgetting the bigger mission. That's tricky because you're working with teams of people. So, making sure that they get together and work together toward a solution is really important. That photo database that I just talked about was for an organization that wanted a web presence and the photo database to be part of that. Well it turned out that the solution for the photo database was an external service that we were going to subscribe to. That's where we were going to house the database. While we were building the website and the web presence in WordPress, we had to figure out how to get those two to work together so that a user doesn't know that they've left the website to go to an

external service. We worked very hard to do this. The teams were incredibly ingenious in making those two interfaces look alike, even though they were antagonistic to each other in many ways, the two interfaces we were working with, but they were very deliberate about making those two work together. And that was because they came together every week, talked to each other about what they were doing, and compared what they were doing. The two teams were not working in isolation, but in collaboration. But they had to work in isolation, and then collaborate. They couldn't do it all together at the same time. Does that make sense? And the one other internal concern that we often have are socio-cultural concerns, sensitivity to things beyond legal and technical, the context in which we live in Saskatchewan and well, in fact, North America is just coming around in the importance of Indigenous issues in Indigenous lives. And how we embrace that in projects is very important, and very much an internal issue, though, something that we have to constantly challenge ourselves on as teams working on projects.