## Bringing Digital Literacy into the Classroom: New Ways of Teaching with Images

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Image source - Wordle.org]	The Center for Educational Resources (CER) is a teaching and learning center serving the schools of Arts and Sciences and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. As this Wordle indicates, our staff help faculty and graduate students improve their teaching. We offer one-on one pedagogical and technology consulting as well as workshops for faculty and graduate students, training and support for Blackboard - our learning management system, training for teaching assistants, grant writing collaboration, and course resource development through CER managed grants. These grant-funded course development opportunities have produced some exciting collaborations with faculty as well as stimulating resources for facilitating student learning. Hopkins has traditionally has been renowned for excellence in what we call STEM disciplines (that is, science,

technology, engineering, and mathematics) and our staff work on many grant-funded projects to improve STEM teaching. But the CER has sought also to fund projects that advance pedagogy in the humanities.

What do we talk about when we talk about Digital Literacy?



[Image source – MS Clip Art]

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Humanities disciplines have long been recognized for their role in providing a foundation for understanding global culture, exploring human experience past and present, investigating ethical questions, and thinking critically and creatively. These studies require writing and discussion skills that foster students' abilities to pose questions, research effectively, synthesize information, and defend their statements.

This expertise is critical for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century professions, which also call for the practical application of digital literacy skills – commonly defined as having the ability to locate, organize, understand, evaluate, and analyze information using digital technology.

With these considerations in mind, the CER has worked with faculty from the humanities on curriculum development projects that broaden student access to 21<sup>st</sup> century careers specifically to facilitate the acquisition and practical application of digital literacy skills within their course work.

4	<section-header><text></text></section-header>	I am going to present three case studies representing projects where we have worked with humanities faculty to embed in their course curricula digital literacy skills, and especially, visual literacy skills, meaning the ability to interpret, negotiate, and make meaning from information presented in the form of images. As you will see, teaching with images isn't just for art historians any more. Two of the projects made use of a CER developed multi-media authoring application we call the Interactive Map Tool; the third used Omeka, web-publishing platform created at George Mason University. While I'd like to show you these applications "live," time and the high potential for technical difficulties caused me to opt for
5	What is the Map Tool? http://www.cer.jhu.edu/maptool.html	Screen shots instead. The CER initially developed this web-based multimedia authoring tool to support "digital field assignments" in undergraduate courses, first in biology, and then in the social sciences. It allows the creation of a hierarchical structure of web pages. These pages can include images, video and audio files, and text.







Introduction to the Museum: Past and Present Using the Map Tool to portray changes in exhibition space and philosophy over time Elizabeth Rodini is a teaching professor in the Department of the History of Art and director of Museums and Society, an interdisciplinary program that introduces undergraduates to the institutions that preserve, interpret, and present our material heritage. Her challenge was to figure out how to better teach an introductory-level course that provides an overview of 500 years of museum history with political, social, and cultural implications.

The placement of objects in a museum suggests meaning that can be difficult to convey. A painting in all of its complexity can be shown in a slide with its meaning relatively uninhibited, but how do you convey the reasons for its installation in a particular museum, its relationship to the other items with which it shares exhibit space, or the changing nature of its importance over time?

The solution was to use the Interactive Map Tool to create a site Rodini calls Mapping Museums. She developed an initial ten case studies to illustrate specific issues associated with the historical development of selected museums. Through a series of pages that include images, floor plans, and objects, each museum's map illustrates the spatial layout of objects, how they are presented in relationship to one another, and the impact of their arrangement on viewers. Exploring the spatial dimensions of a museum facilitates understanding the relationship of the space and how objects are presented as well as the societal interests of the time.

To demonstrate let's visit the American Museum of Natural History in New York and see how one exhibit area has changed over the years.



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Before the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, the ethnological collection of Northwest Coast Indians was housed with Eskimo, Mexican, and Pacific collections. In 1899, these other materials were moved out of the space and the area was renamed *Hall of Northwest Coast Indians*. The 1902 installation was based on the educational mission of the museum; Boas designed the displays to educate the casual visitor as well as the serious scholar. He created so-called life groups [image at upper left] to give an anthropological overview of the Northwest Coast peoples.

As you can see, the canoe is still suspended from the ceiling but now is placed in context with culturally related artifacts.







You will notice on the museum floor plan that today the Haida canoe occupies its own gallery, at the entrance to the *Hall of the Northwest Coast Indians*.

In a way, it's come full circle, hanging from the ceiling once again, but this time it is solitary, an iconic piece for the museum, rather than being one of a number of items jumbled together.

This is just one example of how Professor Rodini has been able to use Mapping Museums to allow students to discover how social, cultural and political factors have influenced the changes in museum exhibition philosophy and practice over time.

When students use this "virtual pop-up book," as Professor Rodini likes to describe Mapping Museums, they can see how people would have entered a museum and what they would have encountered in a given time period. When curators moved those objects in subsequent years, their relocation had significant implications. Students can begin to think about why objects are moved from one period to another and how their relocation reflects the ideas and attitudes of the times.



In addition to the opportunities that the site provided for in class presentation of these case studies, having the Map Tool as a resource that students can access outside of class was helpful for their preparations for tests and class discussions. Students can also explore the museums in more depth on their own, allowing them to think critically and analytically about the meaning of the spaces and objects they are viewing.

Students in the class are given an option to write a final paper or to develop a museum site of their own within the Map Tool. A number of students have selected the latter option each time the course has been offered, and they have consistently given the experience high marks. Students say the museum creation exercise made them think in new ways; they appreciated the variety it offered for class work. Professor Rodini was especially pleased with how they conceived new questions on the museum sites they developed. I'd like to point out that she has incorporated her students' final projects into the site.

There is a separate student project area. Close to 40 projects have been completed to date. Half of these student final projects have been further developed and incorporated into the course site. Modernity on Display: Technology and Ideology in the Era of World War II Using OMEKA for student-created online exhibitions

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Working with CER staff, Professor Bob Kargon in the History of Science and Technology department developed a course entitled *Modernity on Display: Technology* and Ideology in the Era of World War II. Looking at the post World War I world's fairs and expositions as cultural indicators, he wanted his students to explore themes and ideas around the concept of modernity. He also recognized the value of extending student digital literacy and saw that one way to accomplish his goal would be to have students identify, collect and catalog images, maps, texts, and multi-media materials to create a virtual exhibit that would serve as a term project.

The project assignment included writing a narrative exhibit catalog as well as organizing and cataloguing the media materials. Therefore the course included sessions on cataloguing, metadata and data standards, as well as intellectual property rights issues. An in-class oral presentation of each exhibit facilitated the development of students' digital presentation skills.

After looking at a number of options, we suggested that Professor Kargon use Omeka as the publishing platform for the student projects.

## What is Omeka? http://omeka.org/

Developed at George Mason University's Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, Omeka is "a free, flexible, and open source web-publishing platform for showcasing library, museum, archival, and scholarly collections."

The word Omeka comes from Swahili and means "to display or lay out wares." Its "five-minute setup" makes launching an online exhibition remarkably easy.

Omeka has a community of users including scholars, museum professionals, librarians, archivists and educators. Uses include sharing collections and primary sources, creating blogs and podcasts for collection outreach, collaborating with others in the creation of digital scholarship, and producing inquiry-based tasks for students.

[Information from Omeka.org]

The Sheridan Libraries and Museums at Johns Hopkins have adopted Omeka as the platform for virtual exhibitions and it is being made available for course projects as well. Omeka provides a number of built-in templates, making it easy for students to get down to the business of collecting materials and creating exhibits.



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[Image source = 3 cent US postage stamp, scott cat no. 853, issued in 1939 for New York World's Fair; image from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:US 853.jpg] The final results of the student projects in Dr. Kargon's class were impressive. I was able to attend the sessions where students gave their oral presentations, which covered topics such as *Financing the World Fairs*, *Politics through Architecture: The Shift in Interwar Nazi Agendas seen through German Pavilions, Bodies on Display: Medicine at the World's Fairs of the 1930s*, and *Racial Hygiene and Public Health at the 1930's World's Fairs*.

Perhaps it shouldn't have surprised us, but in the class of 18 students, half were from the School of Engineering. These students brought an interesting perspective to the course, and provided an interdisciplinary view in class discussions. In the assessment survey and focus group conducted at the end of the course, the engineering students noted that working with images and learning the complexity of image interpretation, cataloguing, and use in narrative had been an eye-opening experience.

I will show you pages from several of the projects so you can get an idea of what Omeka exhibits can look like. In each case I am showing only a single page from the exhibition – essentially one page from the catalog of the virtual exhibit.





Breast-Cancer: A Cultural-Theoretical Approach to an Illness and Its Meaning Using the Map Tool to enrich student experience

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The undergraduate class *Breast-Cancer: A Cultural-Theoretical Approach to an Illness and Its Meaning* (Women and Gender Studies) explores the history of the breast as a symbol of sex and life, along with the cancer that affects it, not merely as a medical condition, but as a powerful symbol in culture, art, and literature.

Professor of German and Romance Languages and Literatures, Bernadette Wegenstein, felt that students lack a sense of the landscape of breast cancer from the point of view of cultural and media history and from the experience of a breast cancer patient. Her solution was to work with the CER to create a visual database using the Map Tool to bring this media history to life and give students an interactive approach to the medical world of cancer diagnosis and therapy. The pedagogical aim was to create a course that does not just provide information about a subject, but recreates to some extent the experiences of those both suffering from and fighting against this disease.

Rather than merely read about the history of breast cancer, students in this course are brought face to face with how the breast has been perceived in different cultures and different times, and how medicine has investigated and tried to deal with this disease.



47	<complex-block></complex-block>	to today's muscle and nipple-sparing mastectomies that are often performed in conjunction with bonus cosmetic surgeries such as breast-augmentation, or a "mommy- tuck."
48		Students can examine the advantages and disadvantages of media coverage, including how the "pinking" of breast cancer has affected women not only in the US
49	Image: Note of the state of the st	but other countries as well. The History and Culture of Breast Cancer provides a basis for student research assignments that go beyond papers to include role playing and creation of multi- media projects.

50	Lessons Learned What does this have to do with digital art history?	I would characterize Mapping Museums as an application that allows students to take a virtual tour through museums past and present, and Modernity on Display as giving students an opportunity to be a curator of their own virtual collection. The Breast Cancer image database uses visual materials to provide an immersive experience for students wherein they can analyze and react to the medical world of cancer diagnosis and therapy. In all three cases visual literacy skills were an integral part of the curriculum. As I said in the beginning, images aren't just for art historians anymore. Our colleagues in other humanities disciplines are poaching on our turf, so to speak, and doing some very interesting things in the process.
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