Session/Meeting Name: Grass Roots Visual Literacy: An Organic Approach  
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Moderators: Virginia Allison  
Recorder:  

Grassroots Visual Literacy: An Organic Approach  
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Abstract:  
My poster demonstrates methods I am using to create a locally grown crop of visual literacy tools and resources for campus wide adoption. I began this project by conducting a survey designed to measure visual literacy knowledge amongst the UC Irvine Libraries’ staff; resulting data informed my planning process for developing a training rubric for our librarians. My intention is to meet visual literacy needs in the Libraries so that staff may serve as ambassadors of visual literacy on campus. Concurrently, our Libraries’ Department of Education and Outreach, Image Services Team, and our Second Life Team are combining efforts to develop interactive visual literacy modular tutorials in Second Life. These tutorials will also reside online as embeddable learning objects on a Visual Literacy Libguide. My poster showcases the processes we are using to develop and market these tools, and our evolving efforts to root visual literacy initiatives within existing undergraduate curricula at UC Irvine.  

poster image & project updates available at: myartsresearch.info

A Call to Action:  
In their article, Visual Literacy: An Institutional Imperative, Susan Metros and Kristina Woolsey make a compelling argument for merging Visual Literacy initiatives with institutional goals in higher education. They outline three key steps institutions can take to foster Visual Literacy education:  

1. Multimodal fluency: teach a basic visual design vocabulary.  
2. Design context: Provide the places, people, and resources needed for those in the academic community to become visual producers.  

Librarians can play a direct role in fulfilling these goals. However, our library reference staff must have a firm knowledge base of Visual Literacy in order to do so. Librarians can build on the knowledge of our expert collaborators in the Visual Resources Association (VRA) when determining the core Visual Literacy skills we should learn and promote. The recently published VRA white paper, Advocating for Visual Resources Management in Educational and Cultural Institutions states:  

1. ...
“Students need assistance using visual information and developing digital literacies for their academic exercises. This includes identifying reliable image sources, judging the quality of images and associated descriptive data, accurate identification of historical content, and understanding intellectual property and how to cite images in their writing assignments.”

Do Librarians have an accurate grasp of these skills? If not, are there learning resources we can point them to, or should there be some sort of formal training? By creating visual literacy awareness and skills within the library, library staff will be equipped to teach and promote visual literacy awareness on campus.

Survey
I conducted a survey designed to measure Visual Literacy knowledge amongst the UC Irvine Libraries’ Reference Staff; resulting data informed my planning process for developing a training rubric for our librarians. CLICK HERE for survey results.

Initiatives:
The UC Irvine Libraries’ Second Life Task Force is working with allies in our community to create modular visual literacy tools that specifically reflect the research interests in our Humanities Core curriculum. We anticipate launching our first module in fall 2010.

A newly minted Image Service Team will be responsible for implementing training for the libraries and developing online tutorials that will aide users in finding and using images. These training tools will reside on a Visual Literacy LibGuide. Librarians and faculty will be able to integrate these learning objects into their instruction sessions, lectures, and assignments.

- Libguide (under construction): http://libguides.lib.uci.edu/visual_literacy
- ANTEATER ISLAND’s SLURL: http://slurl.com/secondlife/Anteater...and/106/160/23
- Project Concept map: http://mind42.com/pub/mindmap?mid=622a1461-6de1-4ab3-b382-74cbbce1ab47
- Zotero: http://www.zotero.org/groups/visual_literacy/items Our team is also creating a collaborative bibliography that includes the current tools, literature, and resources available to help teach visual literacy.
- Tools: Our first step is to write and refine the tutorials, we are currently in this stage of the project with an eye towards testing different tools that will allow us to build the tutorials with minimal costs involved. Two tools that are on the top of our list are pachyderm and prezi.

Why New Media?
As libraries build their collections and services to include digital reality environments, such as Second Life, it seems only natural to extend efforts in promoting Visual Literacy education within this new milieu.

Online tools and new media such as Second Life provide rich learning environments that allow for multimodal learning to achieve visual literacy. Libraries have the opportunity to engage users in new ways by building learning objects, creating relationships and establishing products that increase awareness and contribute to new forms of literacy.
Key Questions to Consider:
- How can your library implement Visual Literacy initiatives on campus if it does not first provide Visual Literacy training for its staff?
- What resources are currently available to facilitate Visual Literacy awareness and training?
- Why is it important to develop Visual Literacy tools that specifically reflect research interests on your campus?
- How and why should we use online tools and new media to deliver Visual Literacy training?

Key References: