I Spy with My Little Eye: An Introduction to Visual Literacy
Library Guide
http://libguides.lib.umt.edu/visual_literacy

Visual Literacy
A guide to help discuss the aspects of visual literacy, including Mansfield Library image resources.

What is Visual Literacy?
There are many variations on the definition of visual literacy. As part of information literacy, it includes the same abilities identified by ACRL in the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education, including recognizing an information need and locating, evaluating, and using the information.

Images present different cues than textual interpretation, but learning to "read" an image critically is equally important.

An Ethics of Seeing
"In teaching us a new visual code, photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe."

-Joseph Leo, In Plato's Cave

Resources at the Mansfield Library...and beyond
Here is a list of resources to help you locate images within the Mansfield Library's collections as well as on the World Wide Web:

- ARTstor
  Searches hundreds of thousands of images from museums, galleries, and other art collections.
- CAMIR
  This online collection of images from museums can be used for education and research purposes.
- Oxford Art Online
What is Visual Literacy?

- Definitions vary according to discipline.
- General definition incorporates skills of interpreting and discriminating visual objects and their potential meanings.
- Images, symbols, and artwork, have carried a plethora of meanings depending on their context and settings throughout history.
- As technology progresses, use of images and media become equally important to writing in terms of scholarly communication.
"In teaching us a new visual code, photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe."

Susan Sontag, *In Plato’s Cave*

What do we have the right to observe?
What do we have the right to observe?

- Image removed due to copyright restrictions
- Original image citation:

**Evaluating Information**

- **Bias**: What is the author’s stance or opinion about the topic?
- **Authorship (Sponsorship)**: What are the credentials of the author? Who may have sponsored, or paid for, this information?
- **Credibility (Accuracy)**: Is the information substantiated by facts? Is it confirmed by other sources?
- **Coverage (Scope)**: Who is the intended audience? Does the information cover your topic in a meaningful, thorough way?
- **Purpose**: Is the information useful for your topic? Is it directly speaking to an issue you have identified?
- **Timeliness**: Is the information timely to the topic?
- **Reliability (Verifiability)**: Is the information valid? Is it supported by other credible sources?
Sources for locating images

Resources at the Mansfield Library...and beyond

Here is a list of resources to help you locate images within the Mansfield Library's collections as well as on the World Wide Web:

- **ARTstor**: Searches hundreds of thousands of images from museums, galleries, and other art collections.
- **CAMIO**: This online collection of images from museums can be used for education and research purposes.
- **Oxford Art Online**: Click on "Images" below the title page in order to search for images within this resource. Searching within this feature is pretty much limited to an A-Z browsing list.
- **Finding Images LibGuide**: Covers subscription and free online resources to help you locate images.

Visual Literacy in the Curriculum

We have been given a wonderful opportunity to explore themes in visual literacy because of the Capture the Moment Pulitzer Prize Photography Exhibit currently on display at the Montana Museum of Art and Culture.

Here are some websites with ideas for crafting effective exercises and assignments for students with a focus on visual literacy:

- **Focus on Visual Literacy by PBS Teachers**: Succinct guide covering many different types of visual literacy resources and lesson plans.
- **International Center for Photography Curriculum Guide**: For a good overview on visual literacy as it pertains to photography, check out chapter 3 "Visual Literacy: Concepts and Strategies".
- **Library of Congress Visual Literacy Exercise**: Exercise including nice description of the process of looking at and describing an image.
- **Visual Literacy Activities**: Resources compiled on the Visual Literacy Wiki. Wide-range of exercises, including activities easily translated to higher-ed settings.
ARTstor and CAMIO

- Introducing students to metadata so that they can critically evaluate images
- Viewing information on named collections within ARTstor for significance and selection criteria
- Evaluating selection criteria within interdisciplinary contexts and potential biases.
Other resources for searching the web

• Authoritative Meta-Sites

• Google Image Search
  • Sometimes lack of context for images
  • Difficulties in critical evaluation
More Resources on Visual Literacy

Visual Literacy in the Curriculum

We have been given a wonderful opportunity to explore themes in visual literacy because of the Capture the Moment Pulitzer Prize Photography Exhibit currently on display at the Montana Museum of Art and Culture.

Here are some websites with ideas for crafting effective exercises and assignments for students with a focus on visual literacy:

- **Focus on Visual Literacy by PBS Teachers** ★★★★★
  Succinct guide covering many different types of visual literacy resources and lesson plans.

- **International Center for Photography Curriculum Guide** ★★★★★
  For a good overview on visual literacy as it pertains to photography, check out chapter 3 "Visual Literacy: Concepts and Strategies".

- **Library of Congress Visual Literacy Exercise** ★★★★★
  Exercise including nice description of the process of looking at and describing an image.

- **Visual Literacy Activities** ★★★★★
  Resources compiled on the Visual Literacy Wiki. Wide-range of exercises, including activities easily translated to higher-ed settings.

Comments (0)
Newseum web site

“Is Seeing Believing” curriculum

Works with the concept of the manipulation of images throughout history– a timely topic.
Concluding Thoughts

Questions?