Introduction:

Over the last two years the UC Irvine libraries have seen a sharp increase in reference questions concerning the visual.

Image-based research has permeated every discipline on our campus from medicine and science, to comparative literature. [CLICK]
A cursory search through past Reference transcripts provides some examples:

**A Medical student wrote:**

- I am doing a poster for a conference, and I am looking for a picture of the bony anatomy of the knee, I am just not sure where to look for images that are copyright free.

**A Social Sciences student wrote:**

- Where can I get a graph or chart showing population increase after World War Two? Specifically in Los Angeles?

These sorts of questions expand beyond the traditional purview of arts librarians.

Visual literacy education provides a vital set of skills for students, instructors, and all subject librarians to meet interdisciplinary image-research needs [CLICK]
In discussing this proliferation of image-based research with our Reference Coordinator, we began outlining a plan to implement a Visual Literacy Education program.

It is a popular assumption that libraries are perfectly poised to play a direct role in bringing Visual Literacy initiatives to our institutions. We noticed that there is plenty of literature outlining the importance of Visual Literacy Education, but there are few models for implementing Visual Literacy Education in academia.

We had a general idea of how to implement and evaluate a visual literacy program. But we needed to know more specific steps for growing the program such as, which visual literacy skills are essential to promote and what exactly is the libraries' role in teaching visual literacy? [CLICK]
We formed a talented team of staff and librarians and worked together to form our vision:

Our approach for implementing a program for Visual Literacy education starts in the Libraries.

We are currently in Phase One, immerse reference librarians and staff in Visual Literacy Training. In phase one we are training reference librarians and staff to be visual literacy ambassadors, ready to teach and promote visual literacy awareness across campus.

In Phase Two Reference Librarians will embed learning objects created in phase one into their instructions sessions. Reference staff and librarians will apply visual literacy knowledge in reference transactions as needed.

In Phase three we will work with undergraduate curriculum developers to find areas to embed visual literacy education training sessions.

Before we set about implementing our vision, we designed and administered a survey to get a better understanding of what sorts of challenges or frustrations librarians face in working with students and faculty on imaged-based research.

[CLICK]
When asked what skill is most valuable when helping students with image-based research, 33% of reference staff and librarians surveyed thought that possessing web design and Photoshop proficiency was the most important skill need to help students with image-based research.

Possessing the ability to analyze and evaluate visual information was voted as the least valuable skill, second to knowledge of ARTstor which was not selected by any participants who filled out the survey.

Only 25% of reference staff and librarians surveyed strongly agreed that they were confident in their ability to create and manage digital images. Our reference staff and librarians identified areas where they would like more training such as:

- More practice describing images
- A review of image formats and manipulation tools
- More copyright training
- Practice handling image-based research questions

AND

- Help identifying and creating image source citations

[CLICK]
What resulted from this survey, is a training rubric that provides a framework for initiating visual literacy education within the libraries. There are eight modular training sessions on the rubric. Each session includes one to two visual literacy objectives. There are 10 training objectives in all. [CLICK]
Shortly after I issued this survey, The image services team was formed.

The team consists of representatives from many departments across the UC Irvine Libraries:

We were asked to monitor the emerging issues and trends related to image services, image resources, and image standards and to collectively identify ways to share visual literacy skills and fluency with library colleagues.

The team set about developing training sessions based on the objectives in our Visual Literacy training rubric. [CLICK]
We have combined our objectives into what we hope will be digestible training modules.

For each session or module, we are developing a “takeaway” training tool that is embedded in our Visual Literacy Guide. It is our hope that Librarians will be able to integrate these tools or learning objects into their instruction session, libguides, and reference transactions as appropriate.

These sessions will cover image presentation standards and tools, visual data, knowledge of best practices for scanning images, image metadata, digital image creation, editing and manipulation. After each session, we are gathering feedback so that we can improve our resources before sharing them with students and instructors on campus.

We delivered our first session to our reference staff and librarians in the fall of 2010. For session one our objectives were for librarians to be able to articulate image research needs, and to have a clear understanding of copyright, fair use, and image appropriation. [CLICK]
For Session one, we created a hyperlinked mind map titled “Images for Academic Use.”

We used this online tool to explain why it is important to ask patrons how they plan to use their images.

We demonstrated how you can use the hyperlinks embedded in the mind map to quickly find resources when copyright restrictions are necessary to consider, such as:

- when a patron wants to find an image for a poster that will be published on the open web
- or an image that is labeled for reuse for an artistic appropriation assignment
- or when a patron wants to find images for a classroom presentation
We pointed to the clear distinction between our Digital Images Guide and our Visual Literacy Guide.

We adapted the Digital Images Guide, into a campus wide resource for finding subject specific images rather than a resource strictly for arts. Our team created pages for medicine, science, architecture and public domain image resources. [CLICK]
Our Visual Literacy Guide is meant to be more of a learning resource. With information on copyright, citing images, presentation guidelines, and more.

This guide is evolving as we develop learning objects and resources for our sessions. Our mindmap on images for academic use currently resides on this guide.

After introducing these resources, our team provided example scenarios where the reference staff or librarian would need to determine the appropriate image resource to point a patron to. We walked through the scenarios demonstrating how to find images by license type in Google Images and Flickr, and how and when to use images with Creative Commons licenses.

[CLICK]

[CLICK]
We delivered Session two during our winter quarter, this past Feb.

Our objectives for this session were for reference librarians and staff to be able to:

- gain fluency in basic image terminology, including digital image formats and image anatomy

- and to understand and identify the elements and principles of design [CLICK]
We began by introducing the “grammar of visual literacy” through a slide show on the elements and principles of design. For the hands-on component of this session, we prepared reference staff and librarians ahead of time by asking them all to obtain flickr accounts and join our flickr group titled Design 101. [CLICK]
After presenting on the elements and principles of design, we had everyone partner up and try to tag as many photos as possible in our flickr group using the elements of principles and design within a ten min. time frame.

We were then able to search within the group by tag.

For example we could search for the tag “texture” within the group and all images that had been tagged that element would pop up.

This exercise allowed us to review and further define the elements and principles of design [CLICK]
Next, we presented a power point on the anatomy of a digital images

After a short presentation, we used i-clickers to do a “game show” type of quiz. We asked our audience to buzz in the correct definition listed on the right when presented with a term on the left.

- File Size [CLICK]
- Resolution [CLICK]
- File Format [CLICK]
- Pixel [CLICK]
- Compression [CLICK]

[CLICK]
For the final hands on portion of this session, we discussed how librarians design crucial information everyday. We went over a few basic rules on designing and writing for the web, making certain to emphasize how the elements and principles of design apply.

We also distributed the excellent handout from Nedda Ahmed and Jill E. Luedke from their ARLIS/NA 2010 workshop titled: 

*Innovative Applications for Instructive Outreach: Best Practices for Libguides and online Pathfinders*-

Our group practiced using design principles in editing their libguides during the last ten minutes of our session.

In our evaluation survey, half of the librarians that responded did not know about the elements and principles of design before the session. [CLICK]
This winter ACRL’s Image Resources Interest Group or IRIG released a draft document titled: Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. The standards were collaboratively written by members of the Visual Literacy Task force using the information literacy competency standards as a foundational document.

These seven standards are designed to facilitate [quote] the development of skills and competencies required for students to engage with images in an academic environment, and critically use and produce visual media throughout their professional lives.[end quote]

In comparing our objectives with the standards on this document the Image Services Team is excited to see that our rubric mirrors these standards. However, the ACRL/IRIG document goes beyond listing core standards by providing several detailed measurable objectives for each standard. This is a missing element in our rubric and will prove to be very valuable when creating evaluations for future sessions.

Almost all libraries are currently struggling under the weight of smaller budgets and restricted resources. Having a clear set of guidelines for visual literacy education can help your library establish a tailored plan for bringing visual literacy education to your campus. [CLICK]
This month marks our one year anniversary since the Image Services Team was first formed. We are taking this time to assess and evaluate our program of services.

Thus far, the team has found the modular training approach to be very successful. This approach is scalable for the team in that we can develop the sessions one at a time, and short enough that the information we deliver is not too overwhelming. By providing modular nuggets of information once a month, we can re-emphasize what was covered in previous sessions while adding to the reference staff and librarians' visual literacy knowledge base.

As we reflect on our progress, it occurred to our team that in the future we should record our sessions and make them available for others who could not attend or who would like to revisit the information presented.

It is difficult to measure our progress at this early phase. We have not yet attempted to measure if librarians are applying their knowledge in reference transactions or their Bibliographic Instruction Sessions. Once we cycle through all eight sessions, we plan on sending out a short answer survey to see if we can get some indication as to what is being applied. We do have a sense from our reference librarians staff that learning visual literacy skills has been empowering. Not only is visual literacy education useful for reference work, it also directly applies to our work as designers of libguides, webpages, and pathfinders.

An unexpected hurdle is that these sessions take a long time to schedule and prepare, at the pace of one session per quarter, we will not get through our training rubric until Spring of 2012. [CLICK]
The Image Services Team is taking these lessons learned and planning for the future. We hope to begin partnering with UC Irvine’s undergraduate curriculum developers to promote our libguides and integrate some of our tools and resources into image-based research assignments. We are working with our Research Librarian for Education and Outreach to find areas in the undergraduate experience where it would make sense to embed visual literacy training. This next phase will be far more challenging as it requires us to get out of our comfort zone and network while thinking outside of the box.

We feel confident in rolling out our visual literacy training tools and resources to students and faculty across campus because of our grass roots approach. Having vetted these materials within the libraries we know that our staff is prepared to reinforce visual literacy education efforts with students at the reference desk.
The efforts of the Image Services Team have grown organically from the needs of the libraries.

In considering how your library might implement Visual Literacy initiatives on campus, it is important to ask if your staff is fully prepared to reinforce visual literacy standards. After all, image based research permeates all disciplines across campus. Bringing your reference librarians and staff on board can be a first step in reaching key players at your institution. [CLICK]
There are a number of online resources available to facilitate Visual Literacy awareness and education. Our team has attempted to capture some of them on a page of our Visual Literacy guide titled further resources.

The image services team invites you to visit our guide and click through our tools and resources often as our project grows.
We look forward to your feedback and questions, and are eager to hear about and learn from your visual literacy education programs.
In closing I want to Acknowledge those who have contributed to this project, including the:

Image Services Team Members

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