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Rich Texture: New Resources for Teaching and Learning in an Image-Centric World

Kathe H. Albrecht

American University, kalbrec@american.edu

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Abstract

A transcript of Kathe Hicks Albrecht's introductory remarks for the Visual Resources Curators Group session at the SECAC 2011 Conference held at the Savannah College of Art and Design, November 9-12, 2011 in Savannah, Georgia entitled *Rich Texture: New Resources for Teaching and Learning in an Image-Centric World*.

Author Bio & Acknowledgements

Kathe Hicks Albrecht, SECAC VR session co-chair, visual resources curator, American University, Washington, DC Christina Updike, SECAC VR session co-chair, visual resources curator, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA

In teaching, we can think about TEXT as representing the CONTENT of the course curriculum, or “the message.” TEXTURE is that element of extra information—or richness-- that helps the student truly see and understand the underlying CONTENT. TEXTURE is the intrigue that keeps us thinking, a special story that makes us care, a picture or object that helps us remember the message or tie it back to our own lives. RICH TEXTURE makes course curriculum POP and makes the museum visitor remember his time there. It is what constitutes an engaging teaching/learning dynamic. In this session we will look at ways that new electronic resources can help give museum information and educational curriculum that RICH TEXTURE. We will discover exciting new resources that engage the student, facilitate teaching, and enhance learning. The virtual world, as you know, is complex and inventive. We are no longer stuck with those side by side projected slides or brief two-line exhibition wall plaques. Technology presents us with new options, which is good because today’s students expect multi-media learning experiences. Born digital, they can handle multiple platforms and are able to understand layers of information at once. So how can we harness all this new technology? How can we form it into cohesive and useful elements to use in teaching? To begin to answer these questions we’ve asked our colleagues to help guide us.

The session will begin with a presentation by two colleagues, Robin Miller and Deborah Rouse, from our host institution, the Savannah College of Art and Design. We will learn about how they handled a unique donation consisting of film cels, animation drawings, storyboards, color models, and other materials that had been used in the creation of animated features and video games. Available to the SCAD community for research and as a teaching tool, they wondered how to make the collection more widely accessible, and also how to promote it. We will learn about the steps they took to develop this rich collection.

We will then turn to the museum world to learn about new ideas for digital storytelling and how the museum professional must adapt to the changing media-infused culture. Our panelist from the Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens in Washington DC, Stephanie Thornton-Grant, will share some freely-available online tools she recently discovered, resources that can be used in a variety of settings. From VoiceThread¹ to Vuvox² to OneTrueMedia³ and more, she promises to demystify and define digital storytelling--and explain how to create narratives that allow museum visitors to visualize information in new ways.

Our panelist from the Rhode Island School of Design and the new Material Resource Center, Mark Pompelia, will share his experience in grappling with the material samples used in twenty four departments and disciplines on this art and design campus. To bring together diverse physical objects in both analog and digital format staff at the Material Resource Center is looking at new ways to organize, catalog, and present these materials, as faculty learn to be more inventive with their curriculum.⁴

From our final panelist, Alix Reiskind, we will learn how Harvard University developed the extraMUROS project which allows faculty, students, staff, and the public to view, annotate, and remix Harvard-owned digital multimedia collections and to interconnect them with other digital repositories.⁵ With libraries and image collections playing a greater role in preserving, making available and providing innovative tools for interpreting our audiovisual past, present and future, extraMUROS helps explore these possibilities. Beginning with a collection of digitized lantern slides, the project is developing new searching, viewing and geo-referencing capabilities. Faculty, programmers, an audio and film documentary producer, and librarians are working together in a new kind of collaboration.

¹ VoiceThread: <http://voicethread.com/>

² Vuvox: <http://www.vuvox.com/>

³ OneTrueMedia: <http://www.onetruemedia.com/>

⁴ See: <http://library.risd.edu/materialslibrary.html>

⁵ See an extraMUROS demonstration on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/21818193>

If time allows, we will have the opportunity to open up a discussion on what we've learned today. We hope you will come away with new ideas on how to layer rich texture into the materials you manage, share, and teach with.

In the spirit of our endeavor, I will finish my brief introductory remarks by showing a short video. This 4-minute video aptly demonstrates the power of RICH TEXTURE. The subject is not art. It concerns global health statistics. But through its powerful use of new technology and visual imagery, this video allows us to see, organize, and understand thousands of individual statistical data points that come together to give us an important message.⁶

⁶ Introductory remarks concluded with a video Hans Rosling's *200 Countries, 200 Years, 4 Minutes*, from Global Health, BBC, The Joy of Stats, (4:42 minutes). Available online at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00cgkfk>