

## Project Year

2011-2012

## Project Title

Breast Cancer Image Library

## Project Team

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## Audience

Students enrolled in the course *Breast Cancer: a Cultural-Theoretical Approach to an Illness and its Meaning* as well as students enrolled in History of Science, History of Medicine, and History of Art courses.

## Pedagogical Issue

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.

## Solution

Rather than merely read about the history of breast cancer, students in this course will be brought face to face with the cultural and media history of how the breast has been perceived in different cultures and different times, and how medicine has investigated and tried to deal with its particular malady. The image-database will provide a unique tool for bringing this media history to life and the MapTool will allow students an interactive approach to the medical world of cancer diagnosis and therapy. The pedagogical aim is 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.

## Technologies Used

FileMaker Pro Database, Graphic/Information Design, Photoshop, MapTool

## Project Abstract

The undergraduate class *Breast-Cancer: A Cultural-Theoretical Approach to an Illness and Its Meaning* explores the history of the breast as 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. As a starting point, a research environment for the class will be created that includes an image database showcasing the progression of breast cancer in the cultural and medical imaginary: from the paralyzing and disfiguring removal of the breast in the "radical mastectomy" (invented at Johns Hopkins University by William Stewart Halsted in the 1890ies) to today's skin and nipple-sparing mastectomies that are often

performed in conjunction with a beauty operation such as breast-augmentation, or bonus operation such as a "mommy-tuck."

In addition, using the CER developed MapTool, students will experience the decision-making process resulting from a diagnose with breast-cancer: from DNA tests, to the decisions about the various degrees of lumpectomies/mastectomies, to the reconstructive technologies of plastic surgery and other makeover strategies that reconstitute a new body and body image