The Innovative Instructor

Center for Educational Resources

Best Practice Forum

Teaching with Images
Adrienne Lai, Art Libraries Society of North America Intern

What it is
Strategic use of images in the classroom helps engage students who have grown up in a media-rich environment. Digital technology makes images more readily available and easier to incorporate into teaching and learning materials.

Why it matters
Today's students are surrounded by visual media in their every-day lives. With their heavy use of the Internet, they are accustomed to accessing information in both textual and visual forms.
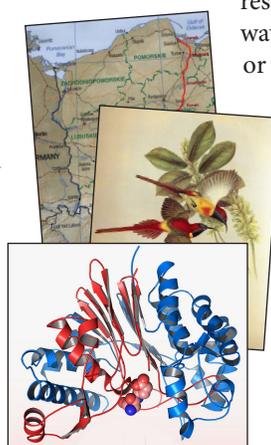
While teaching with images has been at the core of disciplines like art history for decades, all courses can benefit from the use of visual materials in class lectures, assignments, exercises, and resources. Images can be an effective way of presenting abstract concepts or groups of data. Instructors have reported that their use of images in the classroom has led to increased student interactivity and discussion. Teaching with images can also help develop students' visual literacy skills, which contributes to their overall critical thinking skills and lifelong learning.

How to do it

I. Finding images
While a Google Image Search, which draws from the many images available on the Web, can be useful for finding a specific or obscure image, there are problems associated with this method. Google retrieves images based on the text appearing nearby or on the image file names. This often produces hundreds of unrelated results that have nothing to do with your subject. In addition, images posted to the Web may have incomplete or incorrect data attached, and the images may have insufficient resolution for classroom projection or printing.

High quality images can be found through the JHU Sheridan Libraries, which provide access to a number of specialized image resources. These databases provide downloadable, high-resolution images, include reliable information about the images, and allow advanced search capabilities. Resources include:

• **ARTstor**, a database of over one million images in the arts, humanities, and social sciences.
http://jhsearch.library.jhu.edu/databases/proxy/JHU03382
• **Digital Image Database at JHU** (DID@JHU) provides JHU faculty and students with access to thousands of images in a variety of subjects. You can also request to add images for specific courses to the database.
http://jhsearch.library.jhu.edu/databases/proxy/JHU05794
• **Accunet/AP Multimedia Archive**, a database of images, audio files, and texts from 160 years of news and world events.
http://jhsearch.library.jhu.edu/databases/proxy/JHU04350
• **The Image Research Guide** contains search tips, information about copyright and publications, and subject-specific web recommendations.
http://guides.library.jhu.edu/images
• The Center for Educational Resources has a list of websites containing freely available images and multimedia for educational use:
http://www.cer.jhu.edu/mediaresources.html

II. Copyright & Permissions

While technology has made it easier than ever to download, manipulate, and re-publish images, it has also made it easier to inadvertently violate the copyrights associated with them. The use of copyrighted images for educational purposes is allowed under the Fair Use exemptions to the US Copyright Act. Many image databases and websites stipulate the conditions under which educational use of their materials is permitted. To be safe, it is best to consult Fair Use guidelines, such as:

- University of Georgia's Guide to Understanding Copyright & Educational Fair Use: http://www.usg.edu/copyright
- Information about the different types of Creative Commons-licensed materials: http://www.creativecommons.org

In addition, there are some best practices to follow to facilitate the legal and ethical use of images. These include:

- **Restrict online access to images to class members only**. Post images to a pass-word-protected website or space, such as WebCT (or other Learning Management System), or to a shared folder in ARTstor or the Digital Image Database (DID@JHU). If you're not sure how to do this, consult your Research Services Librarian or a CER staff member.
- **Use public domain or Creative Commons-licensed images** if you are posting or publishing images to a forum that is freely viewable by members of the public.

III. Uses of Images

Images will be more effective in the classroom if they are meaningfully integrated into course curricula. Think of ways images can support the delivery of content, illustrate class themes, serve as primary research materials, or be built into assignments. You can introduce images into your course materials through:

- Presentations in PowerPoint, Keynote, the ARTstor Offline Viewer, or the DID@JHU image viewer
- WebCT/Blackboard resources
- Other learning tools, such as the Timeline Creator or Interactive Map Tool
- Primary source materials: photographs as historic documents, maps to inform urban planning and site architecture, diagrams and technical drawings to show the evolution of bridge design, or medical images to practice diagnosis
- Class assignments: images can be powerful as illustrations, didactic materials, or stimulating starting points for structured writing exercises

Additional Resources

- Harris, Benjamin R. "Visual Information Literacy via Visual Means: Three Heuristics." *Reference Services Review* 34.2 (2006): 213-221.
- *Click! Photography Changes Everything*, a Smithsonian project with essays on the impact of photographic images on human behavior, belief, memory, and more. Great for ideas on how to use images in the classroom. http://click.si.edu/Default.aspx
- If you would like to learn more about integrating visual materials into your teaching, contact Macie Hall, Instructional Designer, CER, at macie.hall@jhu.edu.

Author's Background

Adrienne Lai, Art Libraries Society of North America 2008-9 Intern
Sheridan Libraries and Department of the History of Art, JHU

Adrienne Lai recently completed Master's Degrees in Library Studies and Archival Studies at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, BC, Canada. Adrienne also holds a Master's Degree in Fine Arts from the University of California, Irvine. She came to the library profession from several years of teaching art, art history, and cultural and media studies at art colleges in Canada and the US, and is interested in the possibilities of collaborative instructional efforts between libraries, faculty, and technology.