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Visual literacy resources on the Web

A look at what is available

The term *visual literacy* has been used for about a decade, and, in general, it is understood as the ability to interpret, recognize, create or manipulate images. Visual literacy is a complex field because it is interdisciplinary. In fact, visual literacy has a different connotation, for example, if one is interested in technologies used to create and manipulate images or how symbols can be interpreted.

With such vast interpretations, searching for Internet resources can be an herculean task if there is no definition of a subject of study (education, communication, technology, etc.).

The purpose of this guide is to provide general information on resources available online. The Web sites below are organized by subject types. Many of the authors include their own definition of visual literacy.

Great places to start

International Visual Literacy Association (IVLA). This is the official site of the association. The organization is dedicated to the principles of visual literacy. The site offers information on conferences, publications, and resources and provides a definition of visual literacy. *Access:* <http://www.ivla.org/index.htm>.

The Journal of Visual Literacy (JVL). This is the official scholarly journal of IVLA. The journal focuses on the empirical, theoretical, practical, or applied aspects of visual literacy and communication. Archived files are available online and cover the years 1981 to 2005. The journal is published biannually. *Access:* <http://plato.ou.edu/~jvl/>.

• **The visual literacy white paper.** Commissioned by Adobe System and written by Anne Bamford of the University of Technology at Sidney, the paper provides a comprehensive view of visual literacy. Points covered are: a definition, the importance to teach visual literacy and strategies to teach it, and the correlation of technology and visual literacy. A list of books for further reading is included. *Access:* http://www.adobe.com/uk/education/pdf/adobe_visual_literacy_paper.pdf.

Articles and databases

ERIC-Education Resources Information Center. ERIC provides bibliographic records of journal articles and other education-related materials and, if available, includes links to full text. Searching the term *visual literacy* without limits retrieves 2,325 documents, while limiting the search to full text retrieves 597 documents. *Access:* <http://www.eric.ed.gov/>.

“How to Speak Out (Visually) at Your Library.” This article explains the correlation between visual and information literacy and lists teaching strategies for visual literacy; includes a bibliography. *Access:* <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~mbolin/donaldson-zanin-yost.html>.

Thoughts on visual literacy.” First published in the *Handbook of Research on Teaching Literacy Through the Communicative*

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and *Visual Arts*, this article covers basic information on the topic and Abigail Housen's study on aesthetics. Access: http://www.vue.org/download/Thoughts_Visual_Literacy.pdf.

Visual literacy: An overview.”

This paper focuses on the interdisciplinary nature of visual literacy. Visual communication, visual learning and visual thinking are briefly covered. Access: <http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/iel5/9032/28661/01284270.pdf?arnumber=1284270>.

Visual literacy in higher education.”

This article by Ron Bleed, vice chancellor for information technologies at the Maricopa Community Colleges, covers a definition of visual literacy and the need to integrate this skill into the higher education curriculum. Access: <http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI4001.pdf>.

Visual literacy in teaching and learning: A literature perspective.” Suzanne Stokes, professor at Troy State University, offers an introduction to the concept of visual literacy in this article and incorporates a series of studies that examine the effects of using visuals in instruction. Access: <http://ejite.isu.edu/Volume1No1/pdfs/stokes.pdf>.

Visual literacy: What is it and do we need it to use learning technologies effectively?” This article offers a definition of visual literacy and identifies some of the core competencies of a visually literate person. It also covers how the Learning Technology Support Service at the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom, is addressing the need to develop visual communication skills. Access: http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/auckland02/proceedings/papers/ellen_sims_et_al.pdf.

Resources for teaching visual literacy

• **Center for Media Literacy – Visual Literacy.** This site focuses on the media aspect of visual literacy for the K-12 classroom. Articles, toolkits and other resources are provided. Access: http://www.medialit.org/focus/visu_home.html.

Edutopia. Supported by the George Lucas Educational Foundation, Edutopia

provides an abundance of information for educators and there are a variety of video clips to engage students in project-based learning and technology. Access: <http://www.edutopia.org/>.

Information Age Inquiry. Annette Lamb, professor at Indiana University-Indianapolis, created this site as a resource for teachers in the area of educational technology integration; it includes lesson plans. Access: <http://www.virtualinquiry.com/inquiry/visual.htm>.

Information and Visual Literacy: Visual Literacy. Supported by the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme, this site aims to move the use of visuals from basic looking to an understanding on the purpose of images. The site has a few tutorials on how to interpret visuals, and it has a short list of resources. Access: <http://portals.studentnet.edu.au/literacy/DeskTopDefault.aspx?tabid=381>.

Jakesonline.org. This site offers a brief definition of visual literacy and links to resources for teachers. The site covers all disciplines from art to sciences. Interesting are the sections that provide examples of how to use Flickr and the various types of software to produce digital stories. Access: <http://www.jakesonline.org/visual.htm>.

Joel & Irene Benedict Visual Literacy Collection. Created in 1989, the Benedict Visual Literacy Collection at Arizona State University Libraries has served as a resource for students and scholars of visual literacy. The site defines visual literacy as the ability to understand and produce visual messages. The list of Internet resources covers many aspects of visual literacy, but, unfortunately, many of the links have not been updated. Access: <http://www.asu.edu/lib/archives/benedict/>.

Project Zero's Patterns of Thinking. The mission of this project is to understand and enhance learning, thinking, and creativity in the arts, as well as humanistic and scientific disciplines. Examples include collaborations between museums and education that focus on teaching high-level thinking in

and through the arts. *Access:* <http://pzweb.harvard.edu/Research/PatThk.htm>.

Teaching and Learning with Digital Video. Created by Greg Marten of Lenawee Independent School District, this site provides links to selected resources on digital video in education. *Access:* <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/1/pages/listdvma.html>.

The On-Line Visual Literacy Project. This is a site that was created for a project in 1994 and is a guide to the basic elements of visual communication like shape, scale, line, direction, value, etc. *Access:* <http://www.pomona.edu/Academics/courserelated/classprojects/Visual-lit/intro/intro.html>.

The Visual Literacy Toolbox: Learning to Read Images. This site provides a series of links to exercises and tutorials to help faculty customize their curricula to incorporate visual literacy in ways that suit their individual instructional needs. The focus is on the visual arts. *Access:* <http://www.arhu.umd.edu/vislit/index.html>.

Visual Literacy K-8. This site is full of resources to help teachers. Examples of visual texts include maps, tables, timelines, and storyboards. The site is maintained by authors Steve Moline and David Drew. *Access:* <http://k-8visual.info/>.

VUE: Visual Understanding in Education. VUE conducts educational research focused on aesthetic and cognitive development that results from interaction with art. Based on its findings, VUE develops programs for schools and museums, principally Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). Many of the articles are available in PDF. *Access:* <http://www.vue.org/>.

Wikis and blogs

Eye to I: Visual Literacy Meets Information Literacy. This is the joint Arts/Instruction Section program that was presented at the 2007 ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. The blog includes virtual posters from a variety of authors and disciplines. The poster sessions will be available through December 2007. *Access:* <http://eye2i.wordpress.com/program-planning-committee/>.

Teaching Online Journalism. This blog by Mindy McAdams explores how visual literacy is an important component when telling a story. The author asks if words and images need each other to make sense, or if they can they be used alone. *Access:* <http://tojou.blogspot.com/2007/05/visual-literacy-in-multimedia.html>.

The Strength of Weak Ties. This site explores how to use Flickr to analyze images or illustrate writing. The author asks What if every student was given the same piece of writing and was asked to apply photography from Flickr? *Access:* <http://jakespeak.blogspot.com/2005/05/sandburg-meets-ickr.html>.

NJAET. This blog by Cathy Grimaldi explores how and why images affect us. *Access:* <http://njaet.blogspot.com/2007/04/visual-literacy.html>.

Visual Literacy and 21st Century Skills. By David S. Jakes, this wiki covers various aspects of visual literacy. The author uses images and videos throughout. *Access:* <http://visuallit.pbwiki.com/FrontPage>. *ZZ*

(“Recruitment...” continued from page 506)

line librarians. Current ACRL information is being assessed and plans for revisions are underway for marketing, public relations, and related materials. Strategies for institutionalizing ideas are being discussed and include assessing the current research agenda, designing additional items for it, having ACRL units develop action plans to carry out these initiatives, strengthening conference planning practices, and benchmarking best practices in associations and in the field of library and information science.

We have our work cut out for us. I'll be happy if we complete some of the plans I've outlined and develop roadmaps for the future.

Notes

1. Visit www.acrl.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/whitepapers/ACRL_AchievingRacial.pdf.
2. See www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/whitepapers/culturekeepers.pdf. *ZZ*