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Abstracts from the 2013 Oklahoma Research Day
Held at the University of Central Oklahoma

03. Fine Arts and Design

03. Design

03.03.01 Comparative Technology Assessments for Curricular Reform in Graphic Design The Letterpress Lab Project

Amy Johnson,

University of Central Oklahoma

This project tests two letterpress machines that produce the same end result but require different creative processes and pedagogical approaches in the context of a lab to refine teaching methodologies in the discipline of graphic design. Letterpress is the relief printing of text and image using a press with movable type, which is inked and then pressed onto paper. Prior to the computer designers often used the qualities, capabilities and limitations of available technology as an integral part of their problem solving and design process. In many ways the limitations of the equipment at hand forced innovations and expansions within the discipline. Today much of the work of design takes place in the environment of the computer and, while this is an incredibly valuable and powerful tool that engages the student's hands, minds and eyes it is an abstractly mediated process in which constant change is possible without record of iterations tried. The power of the computer has in many ways removed innovation, born from limitation, from the discipline of design. The goal for this project is to develop curricular environments that a) test the impact of reintroducing hand-based skills into the graphic design curriculum; b) test through comparative assessment student learning with hand-based tools verses mechanized tools and c) test student comprehension of design vocabulary that stems from letterpress technology.

03.03.02 Letterpress And The Digital Era

Amanda Horton,

University of Central Oklahoma

survey of the development of the history of typography from Gutenberg to the modern era and covers new digital technology as it relates to typography. This course covers the tools, materials and machines used in the development of type over time. In order to help students learn about historical methods an assignment was created that utilized new digital technology. This paper asks the question: Can new technology help students to understand the past? The technology used for this course is LetterMpress and is available on Mac and iPad. This is a digital tool that simulates what it would be like to create printed pieces on a letterpress machine. With digital advances, some of the traditional printing methods such as letterpress are becoming less and less prevalent. LetterMpress is a unique tool that allows you to learn about this traditional printing method in a digital format. This project helps students to determine the historical significance of traditional and digital typography and to understand the lasting effects that traditional typography still holds on us today.
Technology meets Type: An explorative study of cases where technology has affected the design of typography and vice versa.

Lanie Gabbard, Miranda Lloyd,

University of Central Oklahoma

The marriage between graphic design and technology has been inevitable. While numerous studies have been done within this topic at a broader level, this project aims to identify and document case studies and analyze new typeface design technology to demonstrate how emerging technologies are affecting the design of typefaces. A compilation of case studies found through this research will be documented and it is the intent of this project to aid teachers of typography, design students and typeface designers. These cases can help students bridge the technical knowledge they learn in class with real-world examples of typographic challenges. In addition to documented cases, this project also intends to investigate new software that can be used to develop typefaces to further the discussion on the relationship between typography and technology. The investigator intends to analyze the software for its limitations and advancements from hand-based design so conclusions may be made with regard to the possible design approaches for typefaces in the future. For this part of the project, a new typeface will be designed in the new software. Currently, this project is still in progress. The investigator is continuing to document case studies and is in the typeface development stage of the project.

Continuing the Investigation: Applying Bloom’s Taxonomy as the Framework for Advanced Illustration Studio Objectives

Keith Webb, Rukmini Ravikumar,

University of Central Oklahoma

This study explores curricular reform of beginning, intermediate and advanced studio illustration coursework taught in the Department of Design at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) through the application of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy. A previous study was conducted, showing evidence of improved outcomes for two test groups. Results showed that student outcomes regarding illustrative performance improved significantly in Illustration I and moderately in Illustration II. While the findings were promising, the data was insufficient to support a conclusion as to why there was a greater increase in Illustration I cores vs. Illustration II with this pedagogical design. Additionally, would the application of Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy, as it was applied in the earlier study, influence other mid level and upper level illustration course project outcomes in the same way? In the proposed investigation, four courses will be examined and samples taken from Illustration I, II, III and Environmental Illustration courses in the Graphic Design Program. Prior to testing, student participants will be divided into to two groups based on their standing in class after a precursory assessment of student illustration portfolios. Both groups will receive the same project but one group will receive instruction based on Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy learning objectives. The results of this investigation is relevant to the future of curriculum design in Illustration.
Restructuring of Interior Design Education

Kevin Steiner,
University of Central Oklahoma

Interior Design pedagogy is becoming a function of blending established theoretical and design educational practices with more problem-based teaching and learning strategies. Millennials students need hands-on, interactive assignments they see as relevant. What types of projects can be developed that students of the Millennial Generation see as relevant, providing them the opportunity to gain and implement knowledge associated with the Interior Design profession? Traditionally projects in the studio environment have utilized a hypothetical, pretend client the student never meets. This approach separates the student from the end user and, as a result, the student tends to design the final solution to suit their needs, not the client’s. The newly developed and adopted approach to project completion introduces an actual person to serve as the client. The project developed for this presentation is a result of combined research, and also a hands-on approach to the client-designer relationship. Findings of this procedure for project completion include a heightened awareness of all project deadlines and students’ own professional traits. With this new approach, students realize the solutions they are creating are for someone else, and this realization helps students not to take criticism personally. Furthermore, this approach allows the students to see and practice the relevant objectives, and have the appropriate instant feedback that is desired by the student.

Think Different Making a Case for Teaching Design Thinking as a Part of the Undergraduate University Core Curriculum.

Amy Johnson, Catherine Webster,
University of Central Oklahoma

This project will take design thinking outside design schools and into the general population by creating a Design Thinking Course focused on teaching creative problem solving techniques, flexible thinking, idea generation and idea testing that is suitable and applicable for a University Core offering. This innovative thinking combined with the problem solving and implementation skills inherent in a design education could transform the way students of all disciplines approach problems and develop solutions. This learned ability to think freely within very tight constraints could challenge the status quo in almost all areas. This project would be a significant innovation in teaching creative problem solving and in the core curriculum at the University level. Resulting curricula will be introduced as a short course at UCO and student evaluations used to develop a proposal to implement the project as a full semester course to meet UCO’s Critical Thinking/Aesthetic Analysis core requirement. Research and implementation of this project is ideally timed. Newsweek’s’ article, "The Creativity Crisis", has sparked a good deal of discussion within the University system. While budgets continue to be cut, universities are realizing that individuals who can see problems as opportunities and view challenges as puzzles to be solved, will be the most successful graduates. They will become professionals able to survive and flourish in turbulent times.
03.03.07 The Language of Critique

Rukmini Ravikumar, Krystal Davranoglu,

University of Central Oklahoma

Design is a discipline that deals with solving problems creatively and communicating messages visually. In order to successfully train students in visual problem solving methods it has become imperative to emphasize the process of solving a problem rather than the solution itself to heighten critical thinking in classrooms. A 2008 study titled, 'The Creative Problem Solving Process in Graphic Design Classrooms,' published in the International Journal of Design (Volume 2, No 2) established that an emphasis on process and student-faculty discussions on process could resolve the credibility issues faced by the profession of design. A case was made then for the need to emphasize the creative problem solving process, allowing design instructors to spend more time on how and why a student arrived at a particular design solution and steer away from decisions driven by aesthetics alone. Critique is a process that is integral to design classrooms, has been acknowledged as a seminal teaching and learning methodology. This process requires the instructor cast an objective eye over the work and help the student negotiate their way to the final solution through dialog, analysis and presentation. It requires students to divorce themselves from their work such that they can actively participate in its deconstruction or even demise. This study hopes to analyze and codify the vocabulary used in critique environments.

03.03.08 A Hand in Design

Joanna Meachum, Rukmini Ravikumar,

University of Central Oklahoma

This project will determine the effectiveness of graphic design elements via hand done graphics versus computer generated graphics. It will determine why one is preferred over the other, and if there is a point to where graphics become repugnant. It will also determine if there is a correlation between tactile response and the viewer in relation to these graphics.

03.03.09 The Abstract Visual Elements in Graphic Design

Zixuan Zhu, Xiaomiao Wang,

Southwestern Oklahoma State University

Visual communication is communication through visual elements. In graphic designs, sometimes designers use abstract shapes, lines and graphics to communicate with viewers. Even without photos or illustrations, people can understand a graphic design unit that only contains abstract elements. Can abstract elements tell a narrative story? By exploring and analyzing design methods and principles, I pursued a way to arrange abstract visual elements that can effectively present designer’s idea. As a result, I developed an illustration children’s book that doesn’t have any narrative images or illustrations, and use only abstract visual elements.
03.03.10 Sense of Touch in Graphic Design

Chenming Jiang, Xiaomiao Wang,

Southwestern Oklahoma State University

Graphic design focuses on communication. It is undertaken to convey a specific message to a targeted audience. It typically communicates in a visual way to those with normal vision. Can graphic design be conveyed to those without vision, and how? The people with weak vision usually have good tactile sensation. With some practice they are 9 times better than others. The blind read braille. They touch dots, lines, and shapes to recognize texts. Instead of communicating directly with what they touch, the blinds respond to the words. My design offers the blind experience how sense of touch can raise imagination and emotions. Using a wide range of materials, and manipulating the surfaces can achieve various textures. Exploring how different textures can bring the blind the impact of human sentiments can be a solution to fulfill the purpose of graphic design. Meanwhile, in general graphic design, the texture brings another aspect for designers to convey their idea, and for audience, it stimulates their imagination from both visual and sense of touch.

03.03.11 Kamrooz Aram: People just want the ones that look good

Erica Eppler,

East Central University

As an Iranian American, Kamrooz Arams' art allows him to explore the intersection of Eastern and Western culture. He explores issues of nationalism, religion, identity, and exoticism by layering familiar images from both cultures in his work. Arams' paintings are playful and serious, magical and scholarly, spiritual and secular and they open up a discourse about the complexities of human nature that few are willing to discuss openly. A flat landscape comparable to the Super Mario Bros. video games are used in most of his paintings and he connects with the modern culture through these references. In this setting he places burning vegetation, clouds, and birds of prey found in Persian carpets and miniatures. Through these motifs he asks his audience to reflect on their own preconceived ideas and to confront cultural issues. That is what makes his work stand out from others whose work deals with identity, nationalism, religion, and Orientalism. He sees problems faced by society, but does not let these oppressive subjects overcome him from all the beauty that is in this world.
03.03.12 The “Technicolor City” Project: Collaboration Demystified

Amy Jacobson-Peters,
University of Central Oklahoma

One of the hardest concepts to grasp as a young designer is that an individual does not design alone in a vacuum. A designer always works with others. At the very least, a designer collaborates with a client; but often works with many people to achieve a successful end result. Collaborations involve material representatives, manufacturers, and other designers. Because design relies heavily upon teamwork, a designer must develop communication skills and collaboration techniques; key qualities vital to achieving effective results. As a design student in foundation level classes, creating a situation where collaboration and communication can be practiced is a challenge. The “Technicolor City” project, incorporated into a second semester design course, allows beginning students to develop these skills on a grand scale. As a class, students develop a concept and design a model city. Each student is responsible for one 12” x 12” square which must work cohesively with the other squares around it and ultimately within the entire city structure. Working and collaborating as an entire class is often daunting and overwhelming for beginning learners. This paper relays the process of creating city concepts utilizing design-based strategies. Employing professional design techniques outlined in Tom Kelley’s book, “The Art of Innovation,” helps make a difficult process both fun and engaging, ultimately easing the collaborative process.

03.03.13 The Use of Letterpress Printing as an Aid in Graphic Design Entrepreneurship

Stephen Treadwell Jr., Amy Johnson,
University of Central Oklahoma

With a down economy, many young graphic designers have trouble staying afloat. With low entry-level salaries and the small availability for new hires, how can they survive? Many graphic designers have opted to create products of their own to sell in conjunction while maintaining their career. Letterpress printing was invented in the 15th century by Johannes Gutenburg and over the years has fallen into the background with the rise of digital printing and media. Recently letterpress printing has seen a revival due to its tactile nature that cannot be achieved through digital means. With this revival I will discuss how it’s possible to create products that graphic designers can create through letterpress printing and how these products can create an additional income.
Valerie Settles,

University of Central Oklahoma

Interior design education often focuses on developing new spaces; however, it is increasingly important for designers to utilize existing building stock as part of environmentally responsible design strategies. Students who work with existing buildings gain valuable expertise in historic preservation, which is one element of a sustainable design strategy, while learning about a field of expertise for practicing designers, a critical concern in the difficult job market into which our design graduates are emerging. To expose interior design students to historic preservation and its relevance to interior design and sustainability, a capstone project asked students to rehabilitate a historic building for a new community art center. The project required students to incorporate appropriate spaces into the existing building, utilizing such sustainable strategies as daylighting and recycled materials. Students researched the history of the building, and were required to follow documented standards with regard to the arrangement of interior spaces and the selection of new finishes in those areas with existing surfaces remaining. The resulting designs not only exposed students to the rigors and rewards of connecting interior design and historic preservation; it also helped them develop valuable skills in historical research while developing awareness that environmentally responsible design involved a broader scope than simply specifying recycled materials for new construction.