

Hands on Learning and Practical Designing – Module development within Typography and Graphic Communication

Context

Part 1 and Part 2 modules in the History of Graphic Communication are obligatory modules for all undergraduates, and are the main point of contact for students with the Lettering, Printing and Graphic Design collections. Whilst there had always been facilities for student printing they were not well organised. Further, whilst the collections have always been used in teaching, they were muddled, and there was no electronic catalogue of the contents. This made student access to the collections outside of lectures and seminars very difficult.

Aim

The objective was to give students a deeper understanding of printing history and processes, through handling real artefacts and practical involvement in printing processes. The key challenges this project sought to address were to:

- increase awareness amongst students of the resources and their potential;
- increase the opportunities for hands-on use of the collections;
- provide practical experience of printing processes through printing workshops;
- digitise lecture slides and develop teaching resource packs; and
- to improve awareness amongst students of the contribution that collections-based materials can make to practical work.

Resources and Processes

The project was managed by the module convenor working with a Project Officer.

The first phase of the project was to begin to sort, catalogue and rehouse the collections, including creating a print demonstration area, bringing together the equipment needed to demonstrate the major printing processes. The physical reorganisation of the collections enabled the creation of a dedicated space for students to use materials thus increasing the opportunity for hands-on learning.

The next phase was to develop student resource packs both in hard copy and in the form of interactive PDFs. It also entailed developing a new digital image library including images from the general collection as well as lecture slides.

Work is now underway to conserve, digitise and make available for study even more of the collections, and to consolidate all existing collections descriptions in to a single, keyword-searchable catalogue.

Results

Students are overwhelmingly in favour of hands-on involvement, and the printing demonstrations in particular has been very positive.

'[Printing processes are] quite hard to describe so actually seeing the process was helpful.'

'A verbal description is inadequate to fully understand the processes.'

Feedback from students on the use of collections in teaching has also been positive, and the resource packs have also been valuable. 14 lectures are now available in digitised form.

Sustainability

The printing demonstrations are now firmly embedded in to the curriculum in a way not previously possible. The integration of collections based material in to practical project work has now become a perennial feature of practical modules.

Further information

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