



Good Practices from Mellon Library Partners, 2003-2004

Designing an Online Guide about Research Processes and Sources

Environment:

LA 154 "Learning from the Visual Record" is a capstone seminar for 15 students with majors in Landscape Architecture and allied disciplines. The course encourages students to look at the world with an increased understanding of the development of their built environment, and to increase the visual learning skills of text-based thinkers and the textual skills of visual thinkers. The class is also intended to teach the research process, through presentations by eminent historians discussing and demonstrating their research processes and experiences, and a series of clearly outlined and defined sequential assignments. Students work in teams on research projects that culminate in interpretative site tours drawing upon the visual record, research with primary documents and other text and electronic sources about buildings and landscapes in the Bay Area. The class meets at a seminar table, in a classroom, the Environmental Design Archives, or at outdoor venues.

Impact:

From the students' comments and questions in person and in their journals, it is clear that they are learning how to approach the research project and utilize the information from the range of sources outlined in the online guide and by visiting archives in the area. Similarly, this guide has been used for a number of other reference questions since its development.

Description:

To complement the library session and assist students in completing their semester-long research project, an online guide called "How to Find Information on Buildings and Places" (<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/ENVI/bldgs.html>) was created. The guide assists students by helping them articulate the types of questions they should ask when researching buildings and locations as well as offering links to the types of sources that would assist in finding answers. Online guides can offer a framework for how to approach the project overall and demonstrate how to articulate more specific questions that lead to understanding the larger picture. The "questions to ask" evolved from the syllabus, which is similarly designed with smaller stepping-stone assignments to assist in the compilation of material for the final presentation.

Contact:

Elizabeth Byrne, Environmental Design Library, ebyrne@library.berkeley.edu
Waverly Lowell, Environmental Design Archives, wlowell@.berkeley.edu