



Book Review

Review of *Unframing the Visual: Visual Literacy Pedagogy in Academic Libraries and Information Spaces*

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ABSTRACT

This is a review of the manuscript *Unframing the Visual: Visual Literacy Pedagogy in Academic Libraries and Information Spaces* edited by Maggie Murphy, Stephanie Beene, Katie Greer, Sara Schumacher, and Dana Statton Thompson. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries. 452 pp. ISBN 978-0-8389-3991-8 \$120

KEYWORDS

Visual literacy, instruction, academic libraries

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Unframing the Visual: Visual Literacy Pedagogy in Academic Libraries and Information Spaces is a book specifically for academic librarians teaching about visual literacy. Academic librarians have centered their teaching on providing information literacy instruction to college and university students. With the widespread use of visuals in social media, our everyday lives, and expanded use of visuals in academia, librarians should consider the importance of visual literacy in library instruction. The different parts of this manuscript are aligned with the visual literacy framework and themes adopted by the Association of College and Research Libraries in 2022. Librarians involved in teaching about visual literacy will find this volume to be helpful in providing practical examples of how other librarians have embedded visual literacy in their instruction. This book can be used as a roadmap for incorporating visual literacy in library instruction.

Overview

This manuscript is edited by Maggie Murphy, an associate professor of art and design librarian at UNC Greensboro who is also a practicing artist; Stephanie Beene, an associate professor of art, architecture, and planning librarian at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque; Katie Greer, an associate professor at Oakland University in Rochester, Minnesota who also has an MA in art history; Sara Schumacher, an architecture image librarian at Texas Tech University; and Dana Statton Thompson, a research and instruction librarian at Murray State University. Statton Thompson also has an MFA in studio art and serves as the president of the International Visual Literacy Association. All the editors served on an ACRL task force that authored the visual literacy framework and this volume is meant to share principles of the visual literacy framework in practice within the context of academic libraries.

Strengths

This book is organized in a logical manner related to the concepts in the visual literacy framework. The case studies and examples presented throughout the book provide readers with many ideas for incorporating visual literacy as part of library instruction. As a book about visual literacy, there are plenty of visuals as examples throughout each of the chapters. Pertinent lesson plans and worksheets are shared that other librarians can adapt for their own teaching. Several software tools are discussed throughout the chapters, which help inform novice librarians about tools that could be used in their own instruction.

Chapter Summaries

This 452-page book includes four parts and 24 chapters. Each part corresponds to one of the themes from the visual literacy task force research in visual literacy learning within higher education. Each of the four parts begins with an introduction chapter by one of the editors. Part I: Participating in a Changing Visual Information Landscape centers on social media, which starts with two chapters on remixing focused on rights and access as well as online remix

cultures. Chapter 3 regards the use of TikTok to frame academic honesty and the need to acknowledge visual sources in addition to textual sources and provides a lesson plan and worksheet. Chapter 4 concentrates on the tools of the International Image Interoperability Framework, including the practical use of Mirador to pull images from different collections for instruction. Chapter 5 outlines the visual literacy OER survey tool as well as recommendations for publishing OER. Finally, chapter 6 provides strategies for critical visual literacy instruction at small institutions, including using basic visual grammar and vocabulary, the visual thinking strategies method, and alternative or descriptive text. This final chapter in part I is written by three librarians with visual impairments, providing a particularly helpful perspective on visual literacy.

Part II: Perceiving Visuals as Communicating Information is focused on disciplinary and real-world examples like data visualizations, virtual reality simulations, and sociograms. This section moves beyond traditional visuals like photographs or paintings. Visual rhetoric and describing aspects of visuals, including persuasive functions, are deliberated in chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 7 describes a public communication assignment, while chapter 8 describes instruction with data visualizations. Visual literacy in the nursing classroom is the emphasis of chapter 9, along with curriculum mapping. Sociograms and data visualization are described along with social network analysis in chapter 10. Visual creation as an iterative process with different phases to frame library instruction is discussed in chapter 11. Chapter 12 ponders inclusivity and the need to question biases and assumptions and gaps in the visual literacy framework in addressing universal accessibility.

Part III: Practicing Visual Discernment and Criticality begins with photography instruction and the need for scaffolding visual literacy in chapter 13. Chapter 14 goes into a special collections library visual literacy instruction with analyzing different photographic formats and considering both the content and context of images. Next, chapter 15 describes partnering with faculty in different disciplines including religious studies, history, anthropology, and sociology to teach visual literacy. Chapter 16 shares six activities that provide a road map for librarians to integrate visual literacy in instruction through empathy, mindfulness, and curiosity. Artists' books are utilized to help students explore visuals to communicate information in chapter 17. Chapter 18 covers student exhibition design and using slow looking practices when engaging with visuals.

Part IV: Pursuing Social Justice through Visual Practice opens with chapter 19 discussing ways of improving accessibility for visuals with the use of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, Universal Design for Learning, and the ACRL Framework for Visual Literacy. Chapter 20 addresses maps and how they assert agency or omit certain narratives. Next, a consideration of exploitation and appropriation with remixing visuals and considering ethics in visual literacy is available in chapter 21. Chapter 22 is focused on a student exhibit about food insecurity, while chapter 23 addresses street stickers and how visuals enact social change. The final chapter

provides a trauma-informed approach for archival photography collections of sensitive historical events with information about participatory archives, access and descriptive language statements, and content warning statements.

Weaknesses

As an edited volume, the chapters differ in the depth and breadth covered. Some chapters are more practical than others. Each chapter varies depending on the context of the library and librarians, making some of these examples more helpful than others in being transferable to other libraries and contexts. At 452 pages, this could seem like an overwhelming book for librarians new to visual literacy. This could be mitigated by a detailed index, but in the review copy, no index was present.

Conclusion

Visual literacy is an important aspect of society, especially with the flood of images in social media and everyday life. This book begins to contextualize visual literacy in library instruction and provides 24 examples of ways academic librarians can embed visual literacy in their teaching. *Unframing the Visual: Visual Literacy Pedagogy in Academic Libraries and Information Spaces* can serve as a foundation for teaching about visual literacy in higher education. Readers will find valuable examples and experiences of librarians utilizing visual literacy themes present in the visual literacy framework.