

**ARTH 221: Nineteenth-Century Art
Information Literacy Program Stipend Report**

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Project Summary

In Spring 2012, an Information Literacy Program Stipend was awarded for ARTH 221: Nineteenth-Century Art, an art history course offered through the Art and Music Program, History Department, at the University of Scranton. The course was approved for humanities, diversity, and writing intensive credits, with an enrollment of twenty-four students. Topics covered in the course related to the idea of how art and literature intersect, and how methods for artistic and literary production, publication, and dissemination changed drastically during the nineteenth century due to the advent of new technologies, including photography and industrial printing processes. This crossroads of art and technology foreshadowed developments in information literacy that emerged at the end of the twentieth century, when the proliferation of digital media radically changed the ways in which words and images were created and accessed. To help students better understand these processes from both a historical and contemporary perspective, Darlene Miller-Lanning and Michael Knies collaborated to develop lectures and assignments addressing the ways in which the perception and interpretation of traditional print media is transformed through its presentation in an interactive, digital format. Materials used in these lectures and assignments included physical artifacts and virtual reproductions found in the Weinberg Memorial Library's Special Collections and Digital Archives.

Project Activities

During the spring semester, students enrolled in ARTH 221: Nineteenth-Century Art attended art history and library science lectures focusing on the transformation of texts and images across changing media, and completed writing and presentation projects. In order to facilitate the development of presentation projects, the class was divided into six work groups, each comprised of four students.

Providing a framework for the course, Miller-Lanning conducted eight art history lectures discussing major developments in nineteenth-century art. Special emphasis was placed on topics related to printmaking and publishing, including etchings by Francisco Goya; illustrated books by William Blake; photographs by Henry Talbot; Japanese-inspired reliefs and lithographs by Impressionist printmakers; magazine illustrations by Winslow Homer and Jennie Brownscombe; and engrossings by P.W. Costello. Lectures were presented using powerpoint images posted on the Angel system. When appropriate, students were referred to reputable online digital resources, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art Collections Database and the Blake Archive, for further information.

In conjunction with this material, Knies presented five library science lectures focusing on the development of print and digital media from the Middle Ages to the present day. Topics included an Introduction to the Weinberg Memorial Library Special Collections; Medieval Manuscripts; Evolution of Printing Technology; Evolution of Illustration; and Evolution of Bookbinding and Publishing. During the lectures, students studied manuscripts and books from the Special Collections, including "Alphabets from the Zaner-Bloser Collection," on display in the Heritage Room; hand-lettered manuscripts from the 13th through 15th centuries; early printed books with a variety of cloth and board bindings; relief, etching, and lithographic printing plates; and nineteenth-century publications featuring illustrations and decorative bindings.

In order to experience original works of nineteenth-century art first-hand, students attended a class trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and completed individual writing projects evaluating six paintings they viewed there. As part of their projects, they were asked to gather various types of information about their assigned works both from direct observation of the physical artifacts, which remained constant in time and space, and from digital resources available online through the Metropolitan Museum of Art Collections Database, which were accessed and sorted in many formats.

Midway through the semester, student groups were assigned distinctive, nineteenth-century alphabets from the Zaner-Bloser Penmanship Collection, to be used as the basis for class presentation projects. Alphabets were:

1. Light Line Block Alphabet at <http://digitalservices.scranton.edu/u/?zaneblos,6949>
2. Broad Pen Roman Alphabet at <http://digitalservices.scranton.edu/u/?zaneblos,6950>
3. Skeleton Roman Alphabet at <http://digitalservices.scranton.edu/u/?zaneblos,6951>
4. Sickels Alphabet by Tablyn at <http://digitalservices.scranton.edu/u/?zaneblos,47>
5. Zaner's Aesthetic Alphabet at <http://digitalservices.scranton.edu/u/?zaneblos,6953>
6. Coin's Alphabet at <http://digitalservices.scranton.edu/u/?zaneblos,6952>

Working together, students examined, analyzed, and manipulated their assigned alphabets, which were evaluated as unique, hand-produced manuscripts; printing plates; printed pages in periodicals; and digital images accessible via the internet. Groups shared their work with the class as powerpoint presentations describing the materials used in each version of the alphabets; discussing the manual, mechanical, and/or digital processes by which various forms of the alphabets were produced; considering the intended uses and audiences for each version of the alphabets; and proposing new transformations of the alphabets across changing technologies. Observations on materials and processes included a recognition that handwritten versions of the alphabets often contained corrections that were not visible in "perfect" printed versions; that printed versions varied greatly from the originals in terms of color and scale; and that alphabets on printing plates needed to be lettered in reverse. Comments on uses and audiences included an awareness of the educational and commercial purposes of alphabets printed in periodicals; the widespread accessibility and interactive potential of digital formats; and diverse archival concerns associated with original manuscripts, wood and metal printing plates, paper periodicals, and electronic media. Suggested transformations for alphabets included digital animations where letters, traditionally regarded as stationary images, might move; digital font packets based on the old letter designs, which could be used in computer-based graphics systems and advertising; and engraved quotes for architectural ornamentation, which, while electronically composed, would be manually carved in stone.

Project Outcomes

Information Literacy Program initiatives incorporated in ARTH 221: Nineteenth Century Art familiarized students with the transformations that have historically occurred in information technologies, enabling them to develop critical skills in evaluating the relevance and reliability of sources of digital information readily accessed through the internet. As students prepared for their writing and presentation projects, they were encouraged to consider the benefits and limitations of various informational formats, and to include virtual materials in their research as a supplement to rather than a substitute for encounters with tangible artifacts. In keeping with the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries, this heightened ability to discern the processes by which information was produced and disseminated helped students conducting research determine the extent of information needed; access the needed information effectively and efficiently; evaluate information and its sources critically; incorporate selected information into their knowledge base; use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose; and understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use and access of information. In addition, Information Literacy Program initiatives broadened students' awareness of the Weinberg Memorial Library's Special Collections and Digital Archives, including its Medieval Manuscripts and Zaner-Bloser Penmanship Collection. We gratefully acknowledge the Weinberg Memorial Library's support of this project through its Information Literacy Program.