

Visual Resources Association  
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Session 6: Improving Your Image: Marketing Visual Resource Collections  
Brooke Cox

Advertising is everywhere from radio to television and billboards to magazines even the front of this podium has been branded by the hotel. And we know it works, even if we try to zap the commercials out of our tv shows we still consume marketing everyday – how many of us have made Burger King’s subservient chicken dance or starred in wonder at the latest Apple iPhone ad? Hopefully I’m not the only one. Sure these examples are from large corporations with large advertising budgets, but there are simple and practical ways to advertise especially in this web 2.0 world where anyone can be a content creator.

But why is it important for VRA professionals to market themselves and their collections? During today’s panel presentation we hope to answer this question. You will hear from three visual resource curators who have employed a marketing campaign to advertise their services, collections and spaces. Each panelist will talk about the process of creating their marketing campaign, how they implemented it, and the results of their efforts.

There are three factors that indicate a need for marketing our services more now than before: 1. Our once art-centric user base is shifting to include users from outside the discipline. 2. Our collections are no longer tied to the rooms they inhabit. With the move away from slides towards digital images users can access images from anywhere. 3. The cost of our collections. To justify the costs of licensed content we need to expand usage.

In the past we took our users for granted, we knew who they were and they knew who we were – they physically had to come to us for their images. But now we know that faculty from other departments are using images too. For instance at DePauw, we have users from history, English and modern languages who use images regularly in their teaching, some of them work with us, but I’m sure there are many more who are going it alone. And not just faculty, students too are using images in papers and presentations. With collections on the web and accessible via online databases, anyone, anywhere and at anytime can be an image user.

But who’s helping them find the right images? And by right we mean not just the right painting by the right guy, but an image that is large enough and of high enough quality to make it worth showing in the classroom or including in a paper. We as coordinators of these collections know the value of the services we provide and the quality of the collections we subscribe to and create. As we pay for campus wide access to resources such as ARTstor and AMICA, our end goal should be campus wide use. To say the least, it is a challenge to promote

awareness of our existence and of the resources we provide. We can help track down obscure images....but how do we track down users?

Introduce each speaker:

Gretchen Witthuhn is the Director of the Visual Resources Collection at the University of Chicago.

Jodie Walz is the director of digital collections and archives at the College of Design at the University of Minnesota.

Jessica Bozeman is the visual resources graduate intern at DePauw University.

We will save questions until the end of the session.

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