

HumSlides 2.0: a second generation on-line collaborative image resource for teaching and research.

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Summary (200 words)

This paper takes as its starting point a study that was presented at DRHA06 on the setting up of a digital image collection to support teaching, learning, and research in the department of Classics at King's College London. With new web based technologies we now have the opportunity to apply the lessons learned from that pilot project and with second generation web infrastructures there are new possibilities for making this a more useful resource by addressing the shortcomings of the original project, particularly in the area of collaboration and the dynamic editing of both content and metadata. With these new technologies the user community itself can become a valuable resource particularly in the area of the correction and enrichment of the metadata. The collection becomes a collaborative environment with opportunities for critical engagement by the users. All academic disciplines make extensive use of images to illustrate teaching and support learning, make comparisons, and assist research so although this project uses materials from Classics the model that develops will be of benefit to many other academic areas. Digital media are taking over from traditional slide based delivery and offer significantly greater opportunities for the use of images in teaching and research.

Introduction

The teaching of Classics is heavily dependant on the examination of artefacts left by Greek and Roman culture with images having an important pedagogical impact. Academics and departments build up large collections of slides which have been the traditional medium for images used to illustrate lectures, make comparisons between objects, and provide examples for the students. With 35mm slides and related projection equipment becoming redundant, the School of Humanities at King's College London set up a pilot project to create a digital slide collection to be used for teaching and research. The image holdings of the Classics department were chosen for this project. The author presented a paper on the development, use, and implications of this project (Humslides) at DRHA 2006 with a focus on what could be learned and how (if at all) this project had made any changes to the way images were used in teaching and learning in those departments¹. This paper furthers that study examining the broader

implications for collaborative environments and user interaction within an image based pedagogical framework.

Context

Humslides was set up using a proprietary software package (ContentDM) supplied for a limited period by OCLC PICA. We now have the opportunity to apply the lessons learned from the pilot project (outlined in the earlier paper) and with second generation web infrastructures there are new possibilities for making this a more useful resource by addressing the shortcomings of the original project, particularly in the area of collaboration and the dynamic editing of both content and metadata. It will be shown that with new web based technologies the user community itself can become a valuable resource particularly in the area of the correction and enrichment of the accompanying metadata. In this way the collection becomes a collaborative environment with opportunities for critical engagement by the users.

The main points that arose from user analysis of the original Humslides project are as follows:

Usage:

- The pedagogy applied by the lecturers required a mix of image materials
- Lecturers often used images scanned from books
- They needed teaching sets that covered the whole course
- Humslides provided a good source of high quality images – unlike the web

Metadata:

- Images were easy to find in Humslides but often not suitable as many lacked sufficient data
- The metadata made things easy to find but accentuated the difficulties when insufficient
- More and richer metadata was needed to make this resource more useful

Pedagogy:

- Students need to be shown why they should use this resource possibly by imbedding its use in their coursework
- The images need to be integrated into the course teaching materials
- The content needs to cover the courses taught

One major problem with the original Humslides was that of uncertain copyright and the consequent need to restrict access. The majority of slides in the departmental holdings were legacy material with no clear provenance as well as many taken by the College AV service from popular teaching books. This raises the issue of user rights and restricting access (something that was not possible with the earlier management system other than to limit users by IP address which meant restricting access to the College network and so greatly reducing its uptake and usefulness).

A second generation resource

Humslides 2.0 starts where the earlier pilot left off. We have the digital images; we have metadata that needs to be enriched, we have the views of the existing user community, and now with social networking software we have the possibilities for web based interactive systems for both delivery and collaborative annotation of these images.

This new project examines the possibilities for using existing online facilities (Flickr) to host this teaching, learning, and research collection; a particular focus will be on the area of metadata and the ways in which the possibilities for user generated data can be exploited to create a richer resource. In addition, the greater flexibility of this approach allows the creation of user groups and the development of dedicated teaching sets to address some of the usability issues of the earlier management system.

The essential user-research, stressed as a requirement by the Technical Advisory Service for Images (TASI)², can be drawn from user analysis of Humslides.

New image resource initiatives

In addition to the original Humslides project two further imaging initiatives will be drawn on.

'The Commons', (<http://www.flickr.com/commons/>) a pilot project on Flickr in partnership with The Library of Congress was launched in January 2008 with two main stated aims³:

- To increase exposure to current content held in public institutions worldwide.
- To facilitate the collection of general knowledge about these collections.

Here users are encouraged to add *tags* (metadata) to make the images "richer and easier to search"⁴. The Commons has now been joined by the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney (<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/commons/>) which also encourages the public to add tags and comments to enrich the data.

The OxCLIC image management project at Oxford and their experiences of setting up an Open Source image repository particularly with regards to metadata schemas. OxCLIC (<http://wiki.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ltg-public/OxCLIC>)

Conclusions

All academic disciplines make extensive use of images to illustrate teaching and support learning, make comparisons, assist research, and so although this

project uses materials from Classics the model that develops will be of benefit to many other academic areas. Digital media are taking over from traditional slide based delivery and offer significantly greater opportunities for the use of images in teaching and research.

This project incorporates the feedback and user analysis from Humslides, makes use of existing web infrastructures (Flickr) as a delivery and collaborative framework, and draws on the experiences of OxCLIC (avoiding the costly management and resource overheads of a dedicated server infrastructure) to build a user driven image and metadata collection.

Web based technologies now offer opportunities to develop user driven models and collaborative environments for generative teaching, learning, and research image collections. The collective knowledge of the user community becomes a resource to enhance and drive its usefulness forward. In these cases the more the resource is used the more it will grow and improve. A further advantage of this system is that it helps to develop cooperative and collaborative skills amongst users which are particularly necessary for the upcoming community of humanities scholars and graduates in the workplace.

Resources

DRHA 2006 Presenters and Abstracts:

<http://www.dartington.ac.uk/drha06/papers/abstract.asp?uid=57>

Focusing Images for Learning & Teaching – an Enriched Resource (FILTER) (JISC funded) <http://www.filter.ac.uk/>

Library of Congress Blog: <http://www.loc.gov/blog/?p=233>

OxCLIC wiki: <http://wiki.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ltg-public/OxCLIC>

PICTIVA Project (Promoting the use of On-Line Image Collections in Learning and Teaching in the Visual Arts) (JISC funded)

<http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/projects/pictiva/>

Powerhouse Museum: <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/commons/>

TASI: Using Images in Learning, Teaching and Research Materials

<http://www.tasi.ac.uk/advice/using/image-use.html>

Technical Advisory Service for Images (TASI) <http://www.tasi.ac.uk/>

The Commons: <http://www.flickr.com/commons/>

VADS (the online resource for visual arts) <http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/>

¹ <http://www.dartington.ac.uk/drha06/papers/abstract.asp?uid=57>

² <http://www.tasi.ac.uk/advice/using/image-use.html>

³ <http://www.flickr.com/commons/>

⁴ <http://blog.flickr.net/en/2008/01/16/many-hands-make-light-work/>