Framing Information as Art

Workshop, Part 1: iSquare Pedagogy
Workshop, Part 2: iSquare Research

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Overview

This two-part (90 minutes x 2) Workshop at the Archival Education and Research Institute (AERI) introduces the Archives and Records Management (ARM) community to arts-informed research (Cole and Knowles, 2008) and visual methods (Prosser and Loxley, 2008), using the iSquare Research Program as an example. In the iSquare Research Program (www.iSquares.info), research subjects are given a 4" by 4" square of white paper and a black pen and asked to respond to the question "What is information?" in the form of a drawing, as shown at right. Since 2011, 3,000 original drawings of information, coined "iSquares," have been collected from around the world. The results have provided an accessible, visual complement to the theoretical literature about information (Hartel, 2014a); been mounted in online and public exhibitions (as shown below); and proved successful for teaching fundamental concepts of information studies (Hartel, 2014b). Dr. Pauline Joseph of Curtin University, Australia, has been the first to collect iSquares from students and practitioners in the field of ARM (Joseph and Hartel, in press), and to align the images with core concepts, such as the records continuum model (Upward, 2005). Our two-part Workshop at AERI uses the iSquare Research Program as inspiration and features hands-on activities in a collegial, conversational environment. Part 1 provides an overview of the iSquare project and then explores pedagogical strategies; Part 2 focuses on research opportunities using the iSquare data-gathering protocol. Institute guests are welcome to attend one or both sessions and there are no prerequisites, except a willingness to try something new.

Workshop, Part 1, Framing Information as Art: iSquare Pedagogy

This Workshop introduces the iSquare Research Program, and then focuses on its potential to enliven the classroom. After establishing the merits of drawing as a learning strategy, participants will be trained to administer the iSquare Protocol, a novel application of the draw-and-write technique (Pridmore and Bendelow, 1995). Working in small groups, attendees will have a chance to practice the new approach upon each other. Then, three applications of the exercise will be profiled; they range in difficulty from basic to advanced and align well with undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral populations, respectively. Each of the three examples will be illustrated with evidence drawn from Hartel and Joseph's classrooms, including verbatim student feedback on the experience. Additional creative outputs that employ iSquares will be shared, such as multimedia artworks, online exhibitions, and illustrated stories. The session will close by brainstorming, together, other central concepts of ARM that might be drawn in the future. Attendees will be given complete sets of instructions and scripts to reproduce the activities independently. As an outcome, we anticipate participants will be invigorated to try these teaching strategies in their own classrooms.

Workshop, Part 2, Framing Information as Art: iSquare Research

The second Workshop focuses on the research applications of the iSquare protocol. To start, the tenets of arts-informed, visual methodology will be explained. Then, the research-related elements of the iSquare Research Program will be presented. The topics will include: writing an ethical protocol, recruiting participants, acquiring materials (pens and paper), data gathering (implementing the drawing activity), managing visual data, visual data analysis, presenting results, and preservation. Select elements of the process will be practiced during the workshop, such as the data gathering exercise and three forms of visual analysis. In the end, participants will be poised to conduct their own studies. As an outcome, attendees will have an inkling of how to design and implement research using the draw-and-write technique. In fact, the Workshop will conclude with an invitation from Dr. Joseph to participate in an international, comparative study of information in ARM, using the iSquare protocol.

References

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Presenter Biographies

Dr. Jenna Hartel is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto. She is the winner of the 2016 Library Journal/ALISE Excellence in Teaching Award. Dr. Hartel is an early adopter and advocate of arts-informed, visual approaches in the methodologically conservative field of information science. She says, "My work aims to be an imaginative, energetic, and committed form of intervention in the field of information science. To that end, my ideas are expressed and packaged in non-standard forms of presentation that are playful and accessible to all. I hope to be a catalyst, endeavoring to inspire the field of information science to explore new areas, import new methods, and break out of traditional boxes in which it conducts its research." Please visit http://www.jennahartel.info for an overview of her research, teaching, and service to information science.

Dr. Pauline Joseph is a Lecturer in records and archives management at the Department of Information Studies, Faculty of Humanities at Curtin University. She is also the Graduate Coordinator, for the Department of Information Studies. She graduated from Curtin University of Technology with an Honours degree in 1991 and acquired a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Western Australia in 2011. Pauline has worked for the past 20 years in the provision of corporate information management services in both government and private sectors. Prior to her career move to Curtin University, she last held the position of Information and Records Manager at Shell Development Australia. Dr. Joseph other research projects include an investigation into the sustainability of community-based information practices using the motor sport community as a case study. Dr Joseph's profile has further details on her teaching, research interests and publication history to date, see: http://humanities.curtin.edu.au/schools/MCCA/staff.cfm/P.Joseph. Dr. Joseph will not be presenting at AERI but she will be acknowledged in Dr.Hartel's presentation.