

Visual Research Round-Up

Co-sponsored by SIG-USE (Information Needs, Seeking and Use) and
SIG-VIS (Visualization, Images, and Sound)

Vamanu, Iulian

University of Iowa, U.S. | ivamanu@uiowa.edu

Van Alstyne, Judith H.

University of Rochester, U.S. | judithhvanalstyne1@gmail.com

Ma, Rongqian

Indiana University Bloomington, U.S. | rm56@iu.edu

Hartel, Jenna

University of Toronto, Canada | jenna.hartel@utoronto.ca

Rutter, Sophie

University of Sheffield, U.K. | s.rutter@sheffield.ac.uk

Webber, Sheila

University of Sheffield, U.K. | s.webber@sheffield.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Visual research centers upon images, not words or numbers. Over the past century, visual research has proliferated across the social sciences and today there are innumerable variations. This in-person Workshop “rounds-up” students, scholars, and practitioners engaged in Visual Research across Information Science. Our goals are: 1) To fortify a shared understanding of fundamental concepts associated with visual methods; 2) To showcase the diversity of image-based projects across Information Science, while offering constructive commentary and seeding friendships; and 3) To brainstorm a compelling Research Agenda that maximizes our effort and unifies our community into the future. We hope this workshop will not only deepen everyone’s understanding of visual methods, but also foster a supportive community that encourages productive collaborations among researchers focused on visual media and methodologies.

OVERVIEW

The Visual Research Round-Up will have four main areas, with one 30-minute break.

Part 1: *Fundamentals of Visual Research*: To learn fundamentals of visual research, information scholars need to draw from Anthropology and Sociology, the founding disciplines of visual methodologies. To this end, the first hour of the Workshop will cover such essentials as: reasons to use visual methods (Weber, 2008); the multiple sites of an image (Rose, 2022); the epistemological spectrum that underlies the use of images (Prosser and Loxley, 2008); and variations or types of visual research. Jenna Hartel will deliver this part of the Workshop in a lecture and activity format. She will briefly present the aforementioned tenets and engage the participants in small group activities.

Part 2: *State-of-the-Art Panel on IS Visual Research*: Several information scholars have developed visual methodologies and approaches to research that are influential in the field. The panelists will be speaking about resources and challenges they have encountered and strategies they have employed when conducting visual research. Panelists who have accepted invitations include Dr. Diane Sonnenwald, Dr. Rebecca Noone, Dr. Devon Greyson, and Dr. Alison Hicks. We have also invited Dr. Isto Huvila. Upon this proposal’s acceptance, we will confirm at least three panelists. The panel will be moderated by Sheila Webber.

Part 3: *Presentations of Visual Research*: This portion of the Workshop is especially designed to serve our title by “rounding-up” the wide-ranging array of visual methods at play in Information Science. Information scholars conducting visual research will deliver a 6-minute presentation about their visual research project and/or methodology, using the PechaKucha style (20 slides with 20 seconds of commentary each). This portion will provide participants with a broad understanding of the variety of visual research in LIS and the types of research questions that can be addressed using visual methods. The Workshop community will provide constructive feedback. We anticipate that this activity will crowd-source solutions to problems faced by visual researchers and will bring together peers working in similar areas or methods. To enact this portion of the session, beginning in July, we will post invitations to mailing lists of Information Science, welcoming visual researchers at all levels and stages of a project to share their work in a friendly and supportive setting. This part of the session will be organized by Rongqian Ma and Iulian Vamanu.

Part 4: Co-Design Techniques: The participants will be introduced to co-design techniques they can use to collaboratively develop a research agenda involving visual data or visual methods. Presently, the Visual Methods community in Information Science is fragmented and lacking a shared sense of a research agenda. In the last hour of the Workshop, we will use Liberating Structures techniques to collaboratively envision future research trajectories. We will emphasize inclusivity by hearing from all participants, perspectives, and voices. We will consolidate the ideas into a document to be shared at a later date with the entire community of practice. This part of the session will be spearheaded by Judith Van Alstyne and Sophie Rutter.

ORGANIZERS

Dr. Jenna Hartel is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto. She has published multiple papers about visual methods; hosted and presented on panels and workshops about the topic; and taught classes on visual methods. She employs visual, ethnographic techniques based upon photography (Hartel & Thomson, 2011) and arts-informed visual methods using drawing. Between 2011 and 2018, she collected more than 5,000 drawings of information through the iSquare Research Program (iSquares.info; Hartel et al., 2018), and she creates and hosts INFIDEOS, the YouTube channel of educational videos about Information Science.

Dr. Rongqian Ma is an assistant professor of information and library science at Indiana University Bloomington's Luddy School of informatics, Computing, and Engineering. Her research interests lie at the intersection of digital humanities, digital archives and curation, and information visualization. Ma received her PhD from the University of Pittsburgh, where her dissertation work explored digital humanists' engagement with visualizations and visual technologies. She also holds an MLIS and an MA in East Asian Studies, both from the University of Pittsburgh, and a BA in Chinese Classics from Renmin University of China (Beijing, China).

Dr. Sophie Rutter is a Senior Lecturer in Information Management at the Information School, University of Sheffield, UK. Working with young children, she has used co-design techniques to successfully develop hygiene communication to encourage children to wash their hands. She is also interested in how images and the emotional effects they may produce can be used to communicate information.

Dr. Julian Vamanu is an Associate Professor in the University of Iowa School of Library and Information Science. His research focuses on exploring the diverse ways in which people engage with information, e.g., how people appropriate information that is relevant to their lives, how communities disseminate information that is relevant to their interests, and how we can all learn how to evaluate information that has far-reaching effects on our society. Currently, he is studying the persuasive powers of documents with a strong visual component.

Judith H. Van Alstyne is a Ph.D. Candidate at the Warner School of Education, University of Rochester. She is interested in both visual representations of data and visual methodologies for collecting data. Her research with youth involves Information Places Maps to conceptualize Personal Information Management activities.

Sheila Webber is a Senior Lecturer in Information Management at the Information School, University of Sheffield, UK, and Head of the iSchool's Libraries & Information Society Research Group. Her research focus is on Information Literacy and Information Behaviour. She is particularly interested in research methods that can be used in 3D virtual worlds (particularly Second Life) and in computer gaming. These are environments where much information is visual, and Sheila is interested in how the visual can be used at all stages of research, from research planning through to dissemination.

WORKSHOP AGENDA (We would like to request the Workshop to be on Saturday, October 28th, 1:00 - 5:00 pm)

- Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)
- **Part 1: Fundamentals of Visual Research (50 minutes)**
- **Part 2: State-of-the-Art Panel on IS Visual Research (50 minutes).**
- Break (30 minutes)
- **Part 3: Presentations of Visual Research: PechaKucha style (50 minutes)**
- **Part 4: Co-Design Techniques (50 minutes)**
- Conclusions (5 minutes)

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