Design Arts|2015-2016 Assessment Report

1. Please give a brief overview of the assessment data you collected this year.

Category 4: Medium and Technology

Medium and Technology references an increasingly important learning element in the design program dealing with the expanding array of technology and need for student designers to select the appropriate software tools and exhibit competence in creating, duplicating, converting, organizing and structuring the digital project files.

Summary:

Improvements in student use of software in the design and production phases of design for the print medium have improved. The addition of a third core design course (Design 431) has extended learning and resulted in improved design outcomes and production files. This improvement is evident in the student portfolios produced in Design 431, Graphic Design III, Design 435, Publication Workshop (Voyageur Magazine), English 324, Practicum in Literary Publishing and in Internships.

An **emerging issue** in the area of web and interactive design is the lack of foundational preparation in basic mark-up and programming language as well an understanding of the underlying technology of the WWW. Initial development of a single web design course was adequate for basic instruction, prior to improvements in web presentational technologies. The expanding capabilities and content presentation options has created a need for more depth in the area of web and interactive design basics. Adding an additional Web Design II course would help short term. A better and long term fix would a Design/ICS/ Communications collaborative track in Web and interactive design.

Design Basics: Choosing the appropriate tools

Selecting the best technology tools in the transition from the early stages of problem solving/design thinking into more advanced prototyping and production has previously been more of an issue among our design students at all levels. This has improved significantly with the addition of another studio course

that extended the learning experience in core and advanced studios. In reviewing student files prior to the addition of Design 431 to the curriculum, students often made poor choices in the selection of software tools while finalizing their creative products. This frequently entailed selecting the tool they were most familiar with, such as a vector illustration program to produce a design that would be better served by using software tool specifically designed for page layout and typography design. This practice required either reworking the page design in final production or conforming the file to fit into a group production of larger collaborative document. Both fixes require additional time in production and reduces efficiency in the process.

While developing a design, students naturally select the tool they are most familiar with to avoid making the software an obstacle to fluid creative work. From an instructional standpoint, our standard practice is to encourage students to refrain from using software in the design process until a point where the student has done a number of sketches or storyboards and has exhausted their initial reflexive responses to a design problem. This lessens the likelihood that student's will become "attached" to an early concept because it is somewhat refined looking rather than substantive or because they have invested more time in a single idea and are reluctant to reject it and continue to generate additional ideas. After a process of evaluation, the strongest responses to the problem can then be refined and finalized using software tools and techniques that easily transition into the production process. Student responses to design problems with regard to process and technology use, have shown significant improvement in the area of print design since addition course in the print area have been added to the curriculum.

Web Design: The Need to Improve Foundational Knowledge. Student learning in the area of interactive/web design is increasingly challenged as conventional web capabilities have expanded significantly, requiring a range of knowledge and skills that outstrips our modest instructional offerings in the Design program. While students continue to benefit from the instruction in the basic web course that is currently part of the upper level offerings in the Design program, additional instruction is needed to fully prepare graduates for entry into the design profession as web/interactive designers. Most students who enroll in the Design 433 Web course have had little or no experience in the basics of web mark-up language. Developing the foundations skills therefore becomes a major aspect of the course at the expense of developing abilities in the basics of page and interaction design.

This issue can be addressed to some degree by adding a Web Design II course, that would allow students to continue to develop web design capabilities by building on the web basics acquired in the existing Web

design course. This additional course could be mounted with a reworking of the periodicity of the upper level electives in the Design major.

A better long term scenario would be to develop a web design track in collaboration with ICS/Communications that would benefit students in the Gaming Development minor by helping build skills in visual design while Design students would have expanded instruction in underlying technologies of the WWW.