

The Pre-Raphaelite Resource Project – Audience Research

1. Introduction

Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery has received funding from JISC to digitise its Pre-Raphaelite collection and create an online resource and four teaching exemplars that can be used by FE & HE institutions in teaching, research and learning.

Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery has had previous experience of creating online collections and learning resources, but it has not produced online resources specifically for the post-16 education community. The project is supported by the advice of an Academic Advisory Group made up of members with considerable knowledge of Pre-Raphaelitism and teaching experience.

The outputs for this project are the production of an online Pre-Raphaelite resource with good quality images and information and four teaching exemplars. It is important that these outputs are of high quality and are relevant to the needs of students and lecturers.

In order to precede with the development of a website and online resources it is important for the project team to understand more about what websites and online resources are currently used by students and lecturers to support their academic work. What is used, why they are used, how they are used are some of the relevant questions.

The project plan for the Pre-Raphaelite Online Resource has the stated intention to create a website that will encourage user tagging and user generated content. It is unclear whether these features would be useful or important to the education community on a resource of this type. It is necessary to consult with the people who will be the end users about including Web 2.0 features of this type.

2. Background

Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery is digitising the entire Pre-Raphaelite collection, including painting on canvas, works on paper, sculpture, designs for stained glass, textiles, tiles, printed books, unpublished artists' and associates' letters, notebooks relating to major patrons of the collection, and associated photographic material.

The digitisation project is being funded by JISC. JISC – the Joint Information Systems Committee – is a joint committee of the UK further and higher education funding bodies and is responsible for supporting the innovative use of information and communication technology to support learning, teaching, and research. The Pre-Raphaelite online resource will be fully accessible to the education community and to the general public.

Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery has a large and important holding of Pre-Raphaelite drawings which has never before been comprehensively documented and accessed as a collection. It includes work by the renowned artists Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais and Edward Burne Jones, among others. With the digitisation of these works, this project will create a unique research source for the study of the Pre-Raphaelites and British 19th-century art.

The completed Pre-Raphaelite resource will be on-line in 2009, but it is already possible to see some of the Pre-Raphaelite collection on the BMAGiC and the Edward Burne-Jones websites.

3. Project Plan

The project plan is Appendix A of this document. Aims and objectives, knowledge and experience and project outcomes relevant to the market research are listed below.

3.1 Aims & Objectives

Aims

- To create a high quality Pre-Raphaelite research online resource.
- To offer comprehensive access to Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery's Pre-Raphaelite Collection to the Further & Higher Education community.
- To create linkages with the Further & Higher Education community.

Objectives

- To provide the education community with images relevant to their needs, easy to find, easy to use and customisable.
- To create teaching exemplars that will show how this digital collection of images can be used in the teaching of several subjects.
- To encourage the education community to add material and self-tag images in a way that is beneficial to themselves and other users.
- To establish web links to appropriate Pre-Raphaelite websites, learning repository websites, and HE & FE websites.

3.2 Knowledge and Experience

- Knowledge of the Pre-Raphaelites.
- Knowledge of how the Pre-Raphaelite collection can be used to support teaching in different subject areas e.g. history, literature, theatre, costume, art and design courses as well as the history of art.
- Audience Research – will share with the museum and education communities.

3.3 Project Outcomes

- Images and information about the Pre-Raphaelites will be easily found.

- The online resource is easy to navigate and use. This is important in ensuring that this resource becomes well used.
- The use and re-use of the Pre-Raphaelite resource or images/information from the resource by the education community, e.g. in teaching, research and study.
- The use or adapted use of the teaching exemplars.
- The ability of users to add their own teaching exemplars or other suitable content will encourage the sharing of information and resources.
- The ability of users to tag images. This will allow people who have used an image or images in a different way or in a different subject area than was envisaged to flag this up to other users. This has the potential to encourage both a greater and a wider use of the resource.
- The website will become the best source of information on the Pre-Raphaelites. Web links with suitable websites that have Pre-Raphaelite works on-line, and to the websites of the Pre-Raphaelite Society and the Victorian Society. Appropriate links will also be made with HE and FE institutions that have online resources related to using the Pre-Raphaelites in their teaching.
- Increased public awareness and knowledge of the Pre-Raphaelites.

4. Market Research

4.1 Audience

This research should be undertaken working with under-graduate students, post-graduate students and lecturers. These should come be drawn from Arts subject areas, in particular: History of Art; Literature; and History. It is desirable that the research should include all or some of the academic advisory group for this project.

All those that are asked to take part in the research should regularly use online databases, online resources, and other relevant websites to support their academic work.

4.2 Websites / Online Learning Resources

In order for the aims and objectives to be achieved there is a need to know more about the following and to take recommendations from the findings.

- What online resources are currently used by students, lecturers, etc to support academic work?
- What are the most popular / well used online resources?
- What is behind the popularity of certain resources? E.g. what works well?
- How are these resources used to support academic work by students?
By lecturers?
- What turns people off about online resources? E.g. what does not work?

4.3 Web 2.0 Features

There is also a need to explore question about how the Pre-Raphaelite resource might work.

- The project plan envisages that users will be able to tag images (as on Flickr) This will allow people who have used an image or images in a different way or in a different subject area than was envisaged to flag this up to other users. Is this an attractive prospect to users? Would they tag objects?
- It also proposes that users will be able to add their own teaching exemplars, research information, links or other suitable content. Would users be prepared to add content in this way? What might they add? What would they not add?
- Are there any other Web 2.0 technologies that would benefit users of this resource?
- Would users be interested in podcasts of lectures or interviews? E.g. this could take the form of short pieces on a single art work, or a discussion about the life and work of an artist, etc.

It is important to establish what is and is not likely to be used, especially as some recent research has placed doubts about user generated content: Information Behaviour of the Researcher of the Future (11 January 2008), a Cyber briefing paper commissioned by JISC and the British Library, states that most college students are not interested in social networking facilities, such as the ability to self publish creative work.

<http://www.bl.uk/news/pdf/googlegen.pdf>

Some recent Jakob Nielsen research suggested that 'AJAX, rich Internet UIs, mashups, communities, and user-generated content often add more complexity than they're worth. They also divert design resources and prove (once again) that what's hyped is rarely what's most profitable.' Although the research appears to have focused on commercial websites the comments about user generated content may be relevant and should be taken into account in this research.

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/web-2.html>

Research commissioned by JISC on Web 2.0 for Content for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (28 May 2007) offers a more optimistic viewpoint of the positive impact Web 2.0 technologies could have on the HE sector. The 'catalytic effects of Web 2.0' could create 'greater student independence and autonomy, greater collaboration, and increased pedagogic efficiency'. There is a risk that ruling out Web 2.0 features due to possible lack of early take up and other difficulties might make the website less effective in its ability to support learning.

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/publications/web2andpolicyreport.aspx>

4.4 Teaching Exemplars

The teaching exemplars will focus on four different Pre-Raphaelite topics and show how the images, texts, links, etc can be used to create teaching

resources. The aim is that these exemplars can be used or adapted for use by lecturers, or could be worked through by interested students. What form should these resources take?

- Interactive resources that allow a user to adapt or create resources from online templates on different subjects.
- Word documents
- PDFs
- Powerpoints
- Other formats

4.5 Virtual Learning Environments and Personal Learning Environments

The Pre-Raphaelite Online Resource will be a web based resource but that does not preclude forming partnerships with FE & HE Virtual Learning Environments and supporting Personal Learning Environments in such a way that it could provide a greater benefit some lecturers, researchers and students. The research should establish if the intended audience would feel that there is an advantage to being able to use the learning resource in partnership with their VLE. For example, by being allowed to store and use Pre-Raphaelite images on the VLE. It would also be beneficial to know if and how the resource could support Personal Learning Environments.

5. Schedule

This work needs to be commissioned as soon as possible. A proposal should be made by March 4th 2008, and the work should be completed by the end of April 2008.

6. Budget

The project has a budget of up to £10,000 for this work.

7. Consultant requirements

- Significant experience of audience research, user and non-user testing.
- Experience of this type of work in FE & HE community.

8. Proposals

Proposals should include:

- Details of methodology and a break down of the time and resources allocated for each element of the work.
- A work plan with milestones and deliverables.
- Breakdown of costs.
- CVs outlining relevant experience in relation to the brief with details of personnel to be assigned to the brief.
- A single point of contact for all correspondence relating to the project.

Interested parties should submit their proposals electronically (MS Word or PDF) by 16.00 on March 4th 2008 to linda_spurdle@birmingham.gov.uk

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Please call 0121 303 1610 with any questions.