MSL2325H Museums and New Media Practice
Tuesdays, 1-4 pm, Bissell 728

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<tr>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Costis Dallas</th>
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<tr>
<td>Office Hours</td>
<td>M: 4-6 pm; W: 12-2 pm. By appointment.</td>
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Course description
This course introduces students to the basic theories, fundamentals and practices of museum new media projects. A central goal of the course is to examine how the Internet supports new ways of thinking and learning in museums. Students will consider new methodologies in the presentation of a museum collection and how the public interacts with it. The students will develop a variety of skills including an introduction to digital media, awareness of curatorial models and learning systems, overview of project management, marketing, budgeting for new media and an understanding of the developmental phases of web based projects.

Course overview
New media, based on interactive digital information and communication technologies, increasingly permeate museum communication practice. They appear not only through the familiar museum website, accessible from a computer, but increasingly through intelligent mobile devices such as digital tablets and smartphones, through social media communication and experiences, and through the integration of technology in the museum gallery. Their mode of operation is not only based imparting information, but now includes increasingly the possibility of sharing rich resources engaging the senses, of including content and perspectives of source communities and visitors, and of adopting diverse genres of communication, from that of the computer game to that of dialogue, annotation and mash-up. Beyond acting as mere pointers or containers of information related to physical exhibitions and museum programmes, they may be integrated within communication strategies spanning from the pre- to the post-visit, or they may assume a life of their own, acting as a parallel channel for museum communication and meaning-making to object-based exhibition.
Museum professionals increasingly find themselves in a position where they need to develop strategies, initiate and manage projects, or even conceptualise, author and put together a new media application, be it a museum website, an online exhibition, a mobile guide, or a Facebook page for their institution. Those wishing to be involved in cutting edge research on museums also need to take heed of the importance of new media practice in museums, reflect on the challenges and the opportunities afforded by digital technologies for museum communication practice, and conceive new methods and models to ensure the effective, appropriate and engaging use of digital technologies in and for the museum. Web applications, increasingly accessible through a wide range of devices including smartphones and digital tablets, remain the most important foundation for museum digital media, which other categories of applications build upon. This course seeks to introduce intellectual frameworks, critical examples from practice, and methodological approaches that help museum professionals tackle these challenges.

**Format**

The course will be organised in two tracks: lecture, and workshop, dividing the time of each three hour class as appropriate. The lecture component will include student-led activities, such as group and class discussion, presentations, in-class (non-graded) assignments, and, where appropriate, guest lectures. The workshop component will focus on the hands-on application of conceptual and practical methods for the development of group projects, under the guidance of the course instructor (assignments A2 and A3).

**Objectives**

This course aims to help you develop essential knowledge and competencies for involvement in digital media work and/or research in a museum setting. It is oriented towards practice, using the example of an actual digital project to help you build skills related to methods, techniques and tools useful for the conceptualization, design and implementation of museum new media, but requires that you also develop core knowledge, familiarisation with current and emerging practice, and critical abilities related to a variety of museum new media applications and related concepts and considerations, so that you can exercise sound and informed judgment in actual digital communication work in a museum setting.

While not a formal prerequisite, MSL2331 Exhibitions, Interpretation, Communication (http://www.ischool.utoronto.ca/course-descriptions/msl2331h) is useful as a background to some of the theory in the course. Those interested in developing further skills may decide to pursue further INF2170H Information Architecture (http://www.ischool.utoronto.ca/course-descriptions/inf2170h). A parallel, but also complementary, methodological approach to the fundamental ideas and methods underlying the use of knowledge media in society is provided by KMD1001H Knowledge Media Design: Fundamental Concepts.
Learning outcomes

On completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. Define and examine examples of actual (historically attested) and emerging types of museum new media applications and the technologies on which they are based (evaluated in Assignment A2).
2. Evaluate underlying concepts, applicability and quality of museum new media applications, in the context of the relevant scholarly literature (evaluated in Assignment A2).
3. Explain the functionality and evaluate the applicability of specific digital media technologies for museum learning, communication and interpretation (evaluated in Assignment A2).
4. Apply essential planning skills useful for the conceptualization, specification and development of museum new media projects (evaluated in Assignments A1 and A3).
5. Demonstrate conceptual planning, information architecture and design knowledge and abilities needed to develop the specification for a successful museum web application (evaluated in Assignments A1 and A3).
6. Demonstrate practical content sourcing and production skills needed to develop a successful museum web application (evaluated in Assignment A3).
7. Learn how to build and document a non-functional prototype of a digital project, using off-the-shelf prototyping and presentation tools (evaluated in Assignment A3).
8. Reflect critically on the theory, methods, and practice of new media work in museums (evaluated in Assignment A2).

Contribution to program learning outcomes

The course aims to contribute to the following program learning outcomes:

- *Building awareness and applied understanding of the history of museums*, as regards the application of digital media as a means of representation (course learning outcomes 1 and 2).
- *Building awareness and applied understanding of professional responsibilities* related to the application of digital media (course learning outcomes 1 and 2).
- *Building awareness of museological best practices* as regards the conceptualization, design and implementation of new media applications (course learning outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 8).
- *Building ability to innovate in the face of new challenges*, namely, the emerging digital communication environment in which contemporary museums operate (course learning outcomes 5, 6 and 7).
- *Building ability to communicate effectively by integrating content, form and media to achieve desired goals* in the digital domain (course learning outcomes 5, 6 and 7).
• **Building ability to use appropriate methods to assess on-going project development and to evaluate achievements and effects of museum activities** related to a web exhibit project (course learning outcome 4).

• **Building ability to organize processes involving people, financial and physical resources in order to actualize projects** of digital media communication (course learning outcome 4).

• **Building ability to work in and manage groups and interpersonal relations** in a web exhibit specification and implementation project (course learning outcome 4).

**Assessment overview**

The course will be assessed on the basis of four assignments (described in the Class Schedule section). The dates assignments are due, and their weight as a percentage of the final grade, are presented below.

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<tr>
<th>Assignment – grade component</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1. Digital project concept proposal – individual assignment</td>
<td>February 23</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A2. Critical essay – individual assignment</td>
<td>March 28</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A3. Digital project specification and prototype – group assignment</td>
<td>April 12</td>
<td>50%</td>
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**Resources**

The course is supported by a Blackboard site for purposes of class communication, information, and submission of assignments. Some course materials, links and information may be distributed online (details via Blackboard), but it is the student’s responsibility to download resources available through the University of Toronto Libraries digital access or on the Web. Other digital tools and online services may also be used for particular needs. Finally, links to resources of interest may be posted via Twitter using the #MSL2325 hashtag – students are advised to use the same hashtag to draw attention to resources they also find useful.

The weekly readings, which form the core of the discursive knowledge to be engaged with in the course, are supplemented by the following practice-oriented books:


Students are expected to identify sources on the Web on their own initiative, especially as regards actual museum digital media applications available to the public. The websites of major and pioneering institutions are a good starting point. Also, the proceedings of major conferences focussing on digital heritage and museums, such as the Museum Computer Network, and Museums and the Web. The latter has all its proceedings online, and is a most valuable source for information on professional practice and scholarship in the field of museum digital media ([http://www.museumsandtheweb.org](http://www.museumsandtheweb.org)), as well as on a host of useful information, including museum jobs related to information technology. The annual Best of the Web awards it bestows is a good yardstick for emerging new best practices in the field. The UK-based Jodi awards ([http://jodiawards.org.uk](http://jodiawards.org.uk)) offer a complementary, accessibility-based perspective.

Students should study at least three of the readings introduced each week (those under the “Readings” heading for each week), as well as consult workshop materials, ahead of class. Studying entails reading the full text, consulting easy-to-find examples that the text may be referring to (e.g., by searching on the Web), reflecting on the issues, practices, or approaches introduced, and keeping notes of important points. The option to select from the larger number of readings proposed is intended to provide flexibility to accommodate individual preferences or thematic interests.

### Class Schedule

1. **January 12  Introduction: museums and new media practice.** Introductions, background, interests of course participants. Why new media applications for museums? Examples of new media applications in museums, and technologies relevant to museum communication. Overview of the course and assignments. Key topics, objectives and learning outcomes. Course etiquette, academic ethics, accommodation and resources.

No set readings for this class.

**Workshop: Setting up and planning a digital project.** An overview of the digital media specification and design process. The project team: roles and competencies. Human-centered design: from idea to prototype. Agile approaches to digital media work.

Introducing **A2. Critical essay – individual assignment.**

**Readings**


**Workshop resources**


Mitroff Silvers, Dana, Maryanna Rogers, and Molly Wilson. “Design Thinking for Visitor Engagement: Tackling One Museum’s Big Challenge through Human-Centered Design.” In *Museums and the Web*


**3. January 26**  **Users, learning and diverse knowledges.** Users and user profiles. Learning and digital technologies in the museum. Post-colonial approaches to digital museum work.

**Workshop: Users and functional requirements.** Users and user needs. Use cases and scenarios; personas. Using the personas methodology to visualize the concept and user experience of a digital application. User-centred design: quality and usability.

**Readings**


**Workshop resources**


4. **February 2 Museum websites, online exhibitions and virtual museums.** Definitions of a virtual museum. Digital media for remote access to museum collections. Trends in museum websites and user needs. Accessibility and usability. Content management systems, web application servers, mobile apps frameworks.


**Readings**


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**Workshop resources**


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**5. February 9**

**Gallery, mobile and locative media.** Digital media in museum exhibition space. Mobile guides. QR codes; RFID smart tags, and beacons. Location awareness, mapping technologies and cultural heritage applications.

**Workshop: Developing a digital media project proposal.** Concept development and idea mapping. Strategy and needs analysis. Elements of the project proposal.

**Introducing A1. Digital project concept proposal – individual assignment.**

**Readings**


15-19 February: Reading week. No class.


Due: Individual assignment A1 – Digital project concept proposal presentation. You will be asked to deliver a proposal outlining the concept, rationale, key functionalities and scope for a digital media museum project, and offer a 3’ pitch of your proposal in class.

Introducing A3. Digital project specification and prototype – group assignment.

Readings


7. March 1 **Crowdsourcing, social tagging and user-generated content.** Social tagging and user annotation. Co-curating. Crowdsourcing and User-Generated Content.

**Workshop: Content curation.** Digitising and ingesting digital assets for cultural objects. Content planning, management and curation. Writing content for the web. Usability guidelines for producing effective web text.
Readings


Workshop resources


Workshop: Functional specifications and metadata. Information architecture and interaction design: organising principles (object type, time and space, biographical, etc.). Content types and information organization.

Readings


### Workshop resources


### 9. March 15  Rhetorics, narrative and syntax of digital media


**Workshop: Interface, navigation and information design.** Interaction interface/widgets, types of navigation, way finding. Diagramming techniques for interface, navigation and information design. Understanding technical constraints in information design: templates, plugins and presentation affordances.

**Readings**


**Workshop resources**


**Workshop: Visual design and blueprints.** Visual design, typography, design templates/comps. Grid and responsive page layouts. Using CSS to change the appearance of your web exhibit. Putting it all together: structure, contents and checklist for your web exhibit specification blueprints.

**Readings**

http://resolver.scholarsportal.info/resolve/14626268/v16i0002/79_apimasfce.xml


**Workshop resources**

**Due March 28: Individual assignment A2 – Critical essay.** Examine critically a category or genre of new media applications in museums or heritage (e.g. institutional portals, web exhibits, social media groups, interactive guides, etc.), the use of a particular technology (e.g., QR-codes, locative media, augmented reality, interactive tables, the Internet of things, Linked Open Data, etc.), or a concept, approach, or issue related to the adoption and use of digital media, demonstrating your knowledge of relevant scholarly research and your awareness of what is happening in the field. Approx. 2,000 words.


**Workshop: Audience development and analysis.** Using social media and Web analytics for attracting and understanding your audience.

**Readings**


12. April 5  Final project presentation. You will make a presentation and demonstration of your finished project, and respond to questions. All project team members must participate in the presentation.

Due April 12: Group assignment A3 – Digital media project specification and prototype.

You will define the concept, objectives, audiences, content and functionalities of a digital media application of your choice, specify its information architecture, interface, navigation, sensory and visual design, develop a (functional or “dummy”) prototype, and will present your work in a final report, following the presentation on the last day of class.

Together with the final report, team members should submit a diary outlining their individual contribution to the work of the group, and reflecting on their experience.
Course Policies

Attendance
Regular on-time attendance in class is an important part of this course. If you miss class it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from your fellow students.

Evaluation
All assignments are evaluated in accordance with (1) the University of Toronto Governing Council's Graduate Grading and Evaluation Practices Policy and (2) the Faculty of Information's Guidelines to Grade Interpretation. The Governing Council policy is available at http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/grading.htm. The Faculty of Information's Guidelines to Grade Interpretation supplement that policy and are available at http://www.ischool.utoronto.ca/grade-interpretation.

Late assignments
Assignment 1: a penalty of 2% per day will be imposed on every assignment if it is not handed in by the due date. Papers that are still outstanding 5 days after the due date will not be accepted. Extensions without penalty will only be granted in cases of legitimate illness or emergencies. Such extensions will not be granted for requests made on the due date for the assignment. This policy is to ensure fairness to all students.

Extensions beyond the end of term
Extensions beyond the term in which the course is taken are subject to guidelines established by the School of Graduate Studies (SGS). Please see: http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/current/policies/coursework.asp. “The authority to grant an extension for the completion of work in a course beyond the original SGS deadline for that course rests with the graduate unit in which the course was offered, not the instructor of the course.” Students must petition the graduate unit for extensions, using the SGS Extension to Complete Coursework form.

Academic integrity
Please consult the University's site on Academic Integrity. The iSchool has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism as defined in section B.I. 1. (d) of the University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. You should acquaint yourself with the Code and Appendix “A” Section 2. Please review the material covered in the Cite it Right Inforum workshop and, if necessary, consult the site How Not to Plagiarize.
Citations

References should be included in Assignment A2 according to established academic form. Chicago Manual of Style is the preferred style for this course, but APA, Turabian, or MLA are also acceptable. Please note: All references, notes, and citations to publications, web sites, e-resources, manuscripts, and records must be full, complete and consistent throughout the assignment. It is the students’ responsibility to ensure accuracy and completeness.

Citations are not required in Assignments A1 and A3.

Writing support

The SGS Office of English Language and Writing Support provides writing support for graduate students. The services are designed target the needs of both native and non-native speakers of English and include non-credit courses, single-session workshops, individual writing consultations, and website resources. These programs are free. Please avail yourself of these services, if necessary.

Accommodation of students with disabilities

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let them, and me, know of your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.