

Engaging Education: On the Translation of Imaging Standards to Lab-based Education

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Summary

The context of digitization today is the fundamental shift in the expectations of end-users for web-based access to digital content across a variety of rapidly converging technology platforms and a dramatic increase in the scale, scope, and pace of the digitization in cultural heritage organizations. Google Books launched in 2004. Apple produced the first iPhone in 2007. Ancestry.com went public in 2009, the same year that the Library of Congress announced its plans to *re-digitize* over 170,000 photographs from the Farm Security Administration to satisfy more demanding research and reproduction needs. The inescapable impact of innumerable and fast-paced technological developments is that the survival of cultural heritage organizations turns on universal and ubiquitous online access to high-quality digital surrogates of their holdings.

The point of departure for the closing keynote address is a celebration of twelve years of IS&T Archiving conferences. During this period of fruitful exchange between imaging scientists and programmatic leaders in the cultural heritage sector, we have seen the validation of the science of imaging as the foundation of good digitization practice in libraries, archives and museums. This validation manifests itself in reports on research and development and in the emergence of standards-based guidelines, particularly those of the Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative [1] and the National Library of the Netherlands (*Metamorfoze*) [2]. The ascendancy of image science in the international cultural heritage sector demands new attention to training the next generation of digital imaging specialists.

At this point in time, the success of digitization efforts going forward may depend on the translation of the fundamentals of image science for cultural heritage professionals who themselves are not and may never be image scientists and yet who must lead their organizations to create new digital products worth preserving over time. Williams and Burns, in calling for the “image literate decade” [3] exposes the educational challenge we face, both as scientists and as professional practitioners. Hunt highlights the educational responsibilities of image scientists [4]. Education for good digitization practice also is an important part of advocacy for digital curation [5] and the emergent profession of digital librarian [6]. Dahlstrom and Doracic [7] provide a useful list of lessons learned from offering a dedicated course on cultural heritage digitization, while Conway and Williams report on the experience of introducing diagnostic tools into the classroom [8].

This keynote address is a call for action on a longer term strategy of leadership development where image science meets graduate level education. The address will make a case for engaged learning – inside and outside the classroom – that focuses on acquiring an open and flexible orientation to imaging science,

standards, and guidelines, and workflow practices, while providing exposure to practice-based workflow and client-based product development. The presentation will highlight two emerging programs at the University of Michigan. First, the development of a new Digital Scholarship Lab situates education for digitization in the context of the research needs of humanities scholars. Second, a robust and sustainable program of practical internships places students in the cultural heritage workplaces where digital transformations are most evident and where the need for digitization competence is most needed. The keynote will conclude with a set of recommendations for educational partnerships with the image science community.

References

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Author Biography

Paul Conway is associate professor at the University of Michigan School of Information. He conducts research and teaches courses on archival science, the digital preservation of photographs, books, and audiovisual resources, and the ethics of new technologies. Prior to joining the Michigan faculty in 2006, he was a senior administrator for the libraries at Yale and Duke University. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and is a Distinguished Fellow of the Society of American Archivists.