By Nancy Jo Haselbacher

In fall 2007 I received an Instructional Technology grant to create a blog for Printmaking information and resources. Offering step-by-step visual demonstrations, materials information, samples of current student work, and resources, the blog was created to serve students enrolled in Otis printmaking classes, but also for others interested in sharing information in many printmaking communities.

My hope was to also offer information on the conceptual and historical aspects of the multiple, since much of the curriculum at Otis currently focuses on the technical aspects of the medium. With a change in curriculum this past fall, the screen print classes doubled, and were shortened to half the time. As the only faculty member teaching the printmaking classes I wanted to find a way to get resources to my students outside of our brief class periods that also expanded their knowledge in a fun, easy to access, informal way.

In late summer and fall 2007 I tackled the immediate need, screen print support. With the help of Kathleen Forrest and Sue Maberry I set up the blog on the Otis site. I entered some basic links and wrote a series of advanced tutorial handouts, producing them in Adobe InDesign. I photographed the processes and listed step-by-step instructions. I attended the TLC workshops on setting up blogs, e-portfolios, learning objects, DID, and enhanced podcasts. I discovered that I could not post the tutorial pdfs directly to the blog, so I learned how to set up an e-portfolio for downloads. This proved helpful since I was then also able to post student work samples fairly easily. This was a big request from my current students, to view work samples by other students in addition to my in-class lectures.

Addressing the conceptual aspect of the blog, I posted my report and images from The 2007 Southern Graphics Council Printmaking Conference. The conference is held every year; several thousand people attend and address the academic, technical and conceptual aspects of printmaking. Having presented a paper there, I posted an excerpt from it with examples of Fine Art student Brian Carroll's work.

I finalized the screen print tutorials during semester break and uploaded them to the e-portfolio for the spring semester courses. In addition to the screen print tutorials, I created one to support a process in Printmaking I (lithography), and included resources for general aspects such as paper selection, shared tutorials, and the lab schedule.

Links to the comprehensive resource page on the Los Angeles Printmaking Society website, Youtube do-it-at home printing movies, the LAPS 19th National Printmaking Exhibition at the Art Museum, and a MOMA Flash printmaking demo have proved to be very popular items on the blog. I realized quickly that linking to actual videos was an excellent method for the students and added links that showed technical expertise. From Jennifer Lee:

“I clicked on your second link and started to wonder where the ball grains were. You can’t even find one in that picture but it says that it’s a Ball Grained Aluminum Plate so it’s kind of like "O, okay. I checked out the youtube video. That was way more informative than the picture. wow even though pictures speak a million words, videos speak quadruple that."

More tutorials are in progress now in the form of enhanced podcasts and video since that seems to be very effective.

Linda Dare and I met in February 2008 regarding resources for Letterpress
on the blog. I set up a section for the Lab Press, connecting to book arts in the library, and made pdfs and images for some of the bookbinding tutorials that Rebecca Chamlee had created. Linda has now decided to do her own Lab Press blog after seeing this one in action. Regarding book arts, a post I entered on "librarything.com", (a way to visually catalog your home library) proved to be very helpful and fun to many students alerting me that such general art/technology related items that I was interested were very welcome. In class several students created their own libraries and showed me the ones that had made at home.

In March 2008 I formally requested feedback from the Otis students, though they had been informally submitting feedback since December when the main info had gone online. The response was positive and I received comments both on the blog, via e-mail and in class, interview style. The blog seemed to generate a desire to learn more and I had requests to:
- Post books and artists that I am inspired by
- What comes next? Jobs, careers in the print world, where to print after graduation?
- More supply sources-local, for non-drivers
- Where designers can get their work print in bulk for large
- "How-to" info

In summary, this blog is a work in progress and is now beginning to have a life of it's own. I had a post and recommended link to an online demo from a printshop in the U.K., that my students loved. Students have reported downloading the tutorials if they were working in the lab outside of class for support. I have observed my students discussing the blog posts in class and swapping info, artists, and resources based on what they saw there. With students from Fine Arts, CommArts, Digital Media, Photography, and IPD in my classes, I find that this is the most satisfactory aspect of this process, hearing this type of cross-departmental dialog related to the print. This type of sharing of info on and off the blog is what I had hoped for, in addition to my postings. I look forward to continuing with the blog updates and to what others post as well.

Posted by Sue Maberry at 9:44 AM

Labels: blogs