

**to** Gordon Arnold, Kimberlee Cloutier-Blizzard, Cheri Coe  
**cc** Leonie Bradbury, Sally Seamans, Laura Tonelli  
**from** John McVey  
**what** library site visits, McVey;  
 facilities to support science courses at Montserrat  
**when** 9 November 2008

On Friday 7 November, I visited the libraries at MassArt, Simmons College, and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, all in Boston and all three members of All three of FLO (Fenway Libraries Online).

Also visited Institute for Human Centered Design (formerly? Adaptive Environments), which has an extensive library devoted to universal/human centered design. A report of those visits follows.

I also include edited extracts from an e-mail exchange with Nicole Luongo that scratches the surface, at least, of facilities needs for our science courses.

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## **MassArt**

At MassArt, I spoke with library director Paul Dobbs for nearly 90 minutes. The on-topic portion of our conversation concerned space, image library and copyright issues, and special collections.

### Mission Statement

Massachusetts College of Art's Morton R. Godine Library is committed to upholding the mission of the College through equitable provision of library services and development of collections supporting the curriculum. In this spirit, free and open access to resources is afforded to the College community and the general public.

Employing visionary leadership, the Library supports the College's rigorous programs with quality services, extensive information resources, effective access tools, qualified staff, and an environment that fosters academic inquiry. These fundamentals, built on a solid foundation set forth in the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, inspire creativity, advance lifelong learning, and promote diversity. Through visual, verbal, textual, and experiential pedagogical approaches, the Library encourages users to pursue individual growth and to be responsive, contributing citizens of the global community.

### Goals

In pursuit of its mission, the library has five primary goals:

- 1 To offer quality services which facilitate the use of information and advance lifelong learning.
- 2 To develop extensive information resources that support the curriculum, inspire creativity, and promote diversity.
- 3 To maintain effective access tools that yield timely use of information.
- 4 To provide qualified staff who are supported through ongoing professional development and progressive management.
- 5 To create an accessible, healthy, inviting, and well-equipped environment that fosters academic inquiry.

Dobbs was able to articulate a good definition/rationale for the library : First of all, it is a space. It's a space that that allows someone to step out of the normal — that is, to engage it the reflective practice that we encourage but perhaps don't model. It exists to inspire people. See above goals. Support of the curriculum is not the only purpose of the library.

Need information commons because other (studio) labs are not near primary sources.

Dobbs spoke of acquiring items that could help prod/provoke the curriculum.

MassArt has three people devoted, more or less, to images : (1) visual resources librarian; (2) digital imaging assistant; and (3) an image curator. The visual resources librarian is generally not at her desk, but out engaged in the college. She is keenly interested in digitization issues, open access, etc.

The MassArt Library, and Paul Dobbs in particular, are interested in content based image retrieval :

"...Paul has been interested for a long time in the philosophical and cognitive contexts that led to the dominance of verbal systems. In the last two decades, new technologies have provided visual ways to retrieve visually-formatted information. Paul will outline strategies that the MassArt Library would like to employ to make access more visual for our patrons, including something called "content-based image retrieval" or CBIR. CBIR systems use features that can be extracted from image files, such as color, shape, texture, and line for use in searching a collection of images. In other words, instead of putting in a keyword search for "hue," to find an array of examples, one could use a color wheel to visually select the hue that you want to search. Your search result would then be a series of images that include the specified hue. CBIR also provides drawing tools that allow searches for specific shapes or lines.

In particular, we at MassArt would like to test CBIR in conjunction with our new subscription to the ARTstor image database with some of our patrons to see what kinds of searches our students, faculty, and other visual thinkers might want if they could indeed combine the visual with the textual in their searching. The title of Paul's talk is "How Would Artists Design Content-Based Image Retrieval (CBIR)? Developing a CBIR Application on an Art School Campus."

Rachel Beckwith, Public Services Librarian, in *Godine Library Newsletter* 3 (Spring 2005)

The library contains a new meeting room (that it shares with another department). There was some resistance to this sharing, by some, but Dobbs sees this as a way the library interacts with other parts of the College, and ultimately as a good thing.

There is a computer lab (for paper writing, research, etc). It is not a design lab. There is also a an instructional area — not entirely closed off from the rest of the library's 13th floor — presumably for information literacy and related courses.

Numerous research guides, available via  
[http://inside.massart.edu/library/Reference/web\\_refguide\\_main.html](http://inside.massart.edu/library/Reference/web_refguide_main.html).

We discussed archives (Paul Dobbs headed these, when I was at MassArt in the early 1990s). He urged caution about collecting paintings, sculpture, etc. It's a lot of work. Drawings are better. He did see the utility of a seminar room relating to a special collections room.

\$1,000 budget for artists' books. not a great amount, but then they've been at this for a long time now. Artists' books are on display (in at least two display cases), and are always shown to freshmen during their information literacy/bibliographic instruction. Dobbs reports that the freshmen love this.

MassArt's library has a variety of study spaces around its peripheries; these — even in quite remote corners of the 13th floor — were being used while I was there.

I was able to log onto my own laptop in the library. No login hurdles.

Dobbs was interested in the notion of a library blog, to showcase new or unknown materials.

He has written a report about an information commons, that I am promised. He also suggested I look at Gretchen Wagner, "Sharing Visual Arts Images for Educational Use : Finding a New Angle of Repose. Educause Review (November-December 2007) : 84-104

<http://www.artstor.org/our-organization/o-html/staff-wagner.shtml>

Wagner is an activist, who argues that if educational institutions don't step in now, corporations will.

Also, suggested I look at Larry Lessing on copyright, on TED. and read his new book.

Dobbs has written on learning commons

AICAD meets each year at ARLIS conference.

Dobbs suggested that I might serve on the MassArt Library Committee as an alumnus. And I might.

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### **Simmons**

Simmons recently built a new library. It is an impressive facility, two and a half floors.

Level 1 (the main entrance) floor contains reference and circulation, recent journals, a "diversions / new books" section (with nearby comfortable seating), Library & Information Science collection (serials and books under the LC "Z" heading), and an information commons area. Around the perimeter of this floor are glass-doored offices of library and technology staff, as well as numerous group study rooms. This floor was heavily used when I was there.

Level 2 contains stacks, the College Archives, more group study rooms, two well-appointed meeting rooms, and quiet and semi-quiet (because in trafficked areas) study areas. This floor was less heavily used.

Level G (ground) is stacks (books, children's literature, bound serials, and media). It also includes two quiet study rooms, and a Media Viewing & Listening Room (in which students would watch cultural programs, e.g., relating to Italian or Art History; I presume there is a separate language lab at Simmons).

Simmons provides 155 fixed computer workstations and 39 in-house circulating laptops.

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### **School of the Museum of Fine Arts**

The library at the Museum School does not seem to have changed, space-wise, in at least 15 years. It is crowded. Perhaps Museum School students use the MassArt Library, at least to study.

And then there are the Tufts and (new) Northeastern University partnerships —

*About Northeastern University—*

New this year, SMFA is partnering with Northeastern University to offer a BFA and MFA in Studio Art. As part of this collaboration, students in the SMFA/Northeastern degree programs take studio art courses at the Museum School and academic courses at Northeastern. As a degree student at the SMFA, you'll receive your degree from Northeastern.

Northeastern is a private research university located just blocks from the Museum School and a leader in interdisciplinary research, urban engagement, and the integration of classroom learning with real-world experience.

As a student-centered university, Northeastern offers you a broad variety of support programs and resources that facilitate the many ways you can achieve academic success.

*About Tufts University —*

SMFA has partnered with Tufts University in the education of artists for more than 60 years. As part of this collaboration, students in the Museum School's undergraduate and graduate degree programs take studio art courses at the Museum School and academic courses—such as art history and English—from Tufts faculty. As a degree student at SMFA, you'll receive your degree from Tufts.

With more than 70 majors and an international reputation, Tufts is a great opportunity just a shuttle ride away in Medford. You'll find hundreds of courses—from History of the Blues to The Arts of China to Feminist Theologies—and you'll study with professors who welcome the fresh perspective that artists bring to their classes.

You'll also have access to the university's extensive resources. Tufts' art history department maintains a collection of more than 150,000 slides; the music library offers 35,000 recordings, musical scores, and books on music; and the main library, Tisch, holds more than 750,000 books.

[http://www.smfa.edu/About\\_The\\_Museum\\_School/Institutional\\_Partnerships/Index.asp](http://www.smfa.edu/About_The_Museum_School/Institutional_Partnerships/Index.asp)

I only now learn about SMFA's Mission Hill Building Project —

The first phase of renovations at the SMFA Mission Hill building is complete. Phase I of the renovation and expansion of the former Donnelly Sign Company building into a state-of-the-art education center was completed before students arrived for Spring Semester 2005.

The building project, which began in summer 2004, renovated twenty thousand square feet of ground floor space for classroom, studio, gallery, and administrative use. The SMFA Mission Hill building has housed graduate program studios on the second floor since 1994, and the School will renovate the second floor and add an eighteen thousand-square foot-third floor as fundraising proceeds.

[http://www.smfa.edu/Support\\_SMFA/Ways\\_to\\_Give/Mission\\_Hill\\_Building\\_Project/Index.asp](http://www.smfa.edu/Support_SMFA/Ways_to_Give/Mission_Hill_Building_Project/Index.asp)

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## **Institute for Human Centered Design / Adaptive Environments**

Our Core Beliefs

- 1 Design is powerful and profoundly influences our daily lives and our sense of confidence, comfort, and control.
- 2 Variation in human ability is ordinary, not special, and affects most of us for some part of our lives.

“The AE library is a new member of the Massachusetts Library Network and is open to the public. Our library has the largest collection in the US of publications and multi-media materials on accessibility and universal design.

“The library is named after Dr. Gunnar Dybwad, one of the world's first and staunchest advocates for the human rights of people with disabilities and includes his personal collection related to design. A recent bequest from architect Paul Grayson, one of the seminal leaders in the universal design movement, substantially expanded the collection. A new section of the library will be developed for Universally Designed Specifications with extensive product samples.”

<http://www.humancentereddesign.org>

McVey has long been interested in this organization, but hasn't found a fit for his classes or the department in which he teaches. One idea is to bring a group of students down, or have someone from Adaptive Environments come to Beverly.

Learned (tardily) about "Art beyond Sight Awareness Month, October 2008).

See Art Education for the Blind,

<http://www.artbeyondsight.org>

We start by becoming an institutional member.

McVey has taken a class to, and occasionally visits the museum of, Perkins School for the Blind. Our Design department, in its Client Projects class, has and continues to work with Beverly School for the Deaf.

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### **Nicole Cave**

*What would you like to see, that you don't have? Think big.*

Cave —

Being a natural science kind of person, my ideal learning space for science would involve a lab set up with biology and ecology equipment. Many students over the years have asked why we do not have lab facilities and have expressed a strong interest in taking a science course with a lab component. This would make science much more visual and hands on for them.

A GIS course sounds intriguing. Google Earth <http://earth.google.com/> has some good software that can be down loaded. Certain versions are free and others you have to purchase. I am actually currently teaching an on line Earth Science class through Lesley University using the software available through Google Earth. This course however has already been pre-designed that I teach. I do not have enough background in GIS to design a course on my own. If a geography instructor was brought in to teach a GIS course the Google Earth software could be available for student use on the library computers.

Science in Education Online Master's Degree program

CNSCI 6101 Earth Science From a New Perspective

EEDUC 6134 Earth Science: Curriculum Designed for Understanding

[http://www.lesley.edu/soe/science/pos\\_and\\_descriptions.html](http://www.lesley.edu/soe/science/pos_and_descriptions.html)

uses Blackboard.

Courses can contain up to 20 students and it would be nice to have access to a computer lab maybe 3-5 times a semester. I would pair the students up so at max I would only need 10 computers.

I do give my students research assignments each semester. I have Cheri or in the past Lisa come in and present how to research scientific topics and how to discern reputable sources. With more and more peer reviewed sources offering full text on the web there is not the need for the library to carry specific periodicals or journals I may have liked them to carry in the past. There are however on line science activities during the year that at the other school I teach at, Middlesex Community College I am able to reserve a computer lab to perform. At Montserrat the computer lab usually has a class going on at the same time I teach. More computers with internet access in the library or else where might be nice. It would allow me to bring a whole class of students down at once to conduct research or perform on line science activities.

McVey —

I was thinking -- because it's the only one I know anything about — of Esri ArcGIS. I get a newsletter from them, once or twice a year. I don't know how it compares to GoogleEarth. I presume that ArcGIS is deeper, enables importation of more types of geo-coded data (census, whatever), but could be wrong.

it would be great to have a computer lab available to you; have you ever brought this up to the Administration? how many students do you ordinarily have in a class? would each one need a machine? These things aren't impossible; even now, courses could be scheduled to give you some access to a computer lab, I should think.

personally, I would rather we have a dedicated lab/seminar room, with machines — perhaps laptops, made available during that classtime — but connected with library, in which something like the GIS activity you describe could happen. current library space no well suited for that.

It's a shame to have Salem State, with its quite well-known Geography and GIS programs, so nearby, and for there to be no connection. I've long imagined doing a GIS course at Montserrat, many years ago took several students over to Salem State, to see their GIS lab.

Which by now has doubtless evolved.

<http://dgl.salemstate.edu/default.htm>

the nice thing about GIS is that it's visual, in addition to being analytical, synthetic etc etc.

GIS is so well suited to a visual arts school...

a fantasy I sometimes have about sciences at Montserrat, is that every year, someone is brought in — or you teach it, if able and interested — to teach a once only, never-to-be-repeated course focused on one topic. Astronomy. Perhaps Astronomy/Navigation. Meteorology. Geophysics. Physics (you may know the book, *Physics for Poets*; it might also include a book on current theoretical physics — Greene, I think, is an author of several of these). (you can see my non-biological biases, here, I suppose...)

It would take planning, and suitable lab facilities... anyway, one thought.

one last idea : there should (and could, immediately) be a wall that's the "science wall," where clippings from the *New York Times* Science Tuesday, or wherever, go. Science news does not go unreported in the news media, sometimes it's done pretty well. There should be a way to make it visible.

Cave —

The science wall you mention sounds like a fun idea. I regularly bring in current articles for my students and it would be nice to post them for others to see. At Middlesex Community College there is a large bulletin board devoted just for this purpose.