Chapter 1

Getting Visually Acquainted With a Learning Discipline, Related Professions, and an Overarching Domain:
An Environmental Scan

ABSTRACT

Instructional designers create learning about subjects about which they are non-experts and outsiders. Using formal and informal visuals to learn about a field will shed light on aspects of a discipline and its related professions and overarching domain. The imagery may offer a path to learning that may be more accessible than through other modalities at least initially, and these images may be a gateway to further research and learning (textually). Here, using visuals is shown to complement other modes of learning about a field.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will explore the following questions:

- In analyzing the visuals of a particular discipline, related professions, and the over-arching domain, what can be learned about the following:
  - Learning practices

- ◦ Work processes and practices
- ◦ Research and data practices
- ◦ Main personages (historical and contemporaneous)
- ◦ Practitioners
- ◦ Professional ethics and standards
- What are the main communicative visuals of the discipline/profession/domain? What do these suggest about aesthetics?
- What part of this discipline/profession/domain will the targeted learning cover? What are some competing learning resources in the domain? What are contested aspects of the information, and how should contesting and uncertainty be represented?
- What is a logical workflow sequence in terms of learning about a discipline/profession/domain through social visuals?
- How can learning designs be informed by social visuals related to a discipline/profession/domain?

Acclimating to a particular learning discipline (a particular branch of knowledge in higher education, an academic field of study), related professions, and an overarching domain (an area of knowledge and related activities) is part and parcel of instructional design work. In this work, a "discipline" and related "professions" fall within a learning "domain." One approach to understanding disciplines is to separate them into the following: social sciences, natural sciences, formal sciences, professions, and the humanities, in one public mind map (Useamuse, Nov. 17, 2015). Professions are occupations centrally related to a particular area of study. And a domain is a broad topical category. Among these, there are overlaps, so the lines of demarcation between various aspects are contested and contestable. These are proposed only as roughcut groupings.

Generally speaking, it helps to know what the field includes in terms of the following:

- its history
- its main personages
- its main research approaches
- its data handling
- its contributions to modern thinking
- its professional ethics (and underlying value systems)
- its guiding principles and values
- its professional practices, and other basic touchpoints

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