

Chapter 11

Graphic Design Collections: Development and Assessment within an Emerging Interdisciplinary Field

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ABSTRACT

Library collection development in support of professional programs in graphic design involves acquisition of materials in all formats and media, with an emphasis on content with high quality visual properties, whether print, digital, or ephemeral. The integral role played by technology and software in graphic design means that meeting the ongoing information technology needs of students and faculty is a challenge. This chapter intends to guide the graphic design librarian in the strategic development of library collections by reviewing the major characteristics of the discipline and literature of graphic design, exploring core resources, genres and formats, and describing their acquisition and organization. An overview of the primary professional organizations in graphic design, along with a brief discussion of accrediting bodies and their requirements is included. Major publishers, content providers, and discovery tools are discussed, and the implications of emerging trends and controversies for collection development are considered.

INTRODUCTION

Schools of graphic art and design prepare students for a variety of careers, in freelance design studios, corporate design departments, advertising agencies, media production, and new media

design offices. Graphic design schools may offer graduate, undergraduate or certificate programs, with widely variable coursework that generally includes the history and theories of visual communication and graphic design, studio art techniques, computer graphics, marketing and advertising,

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digital and social media, and technical concepts and practices. Programs offer specializations in fields as varied as art direction, illustration, Web design, magazine and book design, container design, branding, and computer animation. With the importance of emerging technologies to the professional design practitioner, information technology, computer-aided design, and social and digital media have become essential components of graphic design education. Library collections supporting graphic design must provide students with resources that support a wide-ranging curriculum, as well as practical resources about the business side of graphic design: how to start a business, find a job, market skills, and develop as an art entrepreneur.

When selecting materials in graphic art and design, the information needs of a diverse community of users must be considered, including scholars engaged in teaching and academic research, undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in graphic design programs, students enrolled in specialized technical institutes, and design professionals. For graphic design practitioners to maintain awareness of emerging trends in graphic design, as well as innovations in technology and software applications, requires ongoing professional development. Research needs of users vary as well, with academic research requiring access to specialized and interdisciplinary databases that abstract, index, and link to the full text content of peer-reviewed journal articles in art criticism and art history, psychology and popular culture, and advertising and marketing. Databases of images, including photographs, artwork, logos, typography, and design portfolios are used by virtually all users, and are core resources for graphic design. These include both proprietary and open access resources.

Although graphic design curricula may emphasize applied art techniques, technical design, and business practices, graphic art programs require substantive collections of works on art history, theory, and criticism, as well as fine print

reproductions of works from major museums, artists, and movements. Biographical resources, particularly those that focus on graphic designers, digital media, book arts, illustrators, or on under-represented groups of artists, are frequently requested. Because modern graphic design strives to include visual elements from all cultures and historic eras, graphic design students require information on the art and visual traditions of diverse cultures and countries. Collection strengths may include works of, or about, cartoons, comics, graphic novels and manga, posters, logos, fonts, textiles, and storyboards. Finally, the research and teaching in graphic art and design programs may be concerned not just with the content of the work, but with the container itself. Thus, libraries supporting these programs may choose to collect ephemera that are difficult to acquire, catalog, and preserve (Casiot, 2006).

Collection development activities in graphic design combine standard selection practices, such as use of core bibliographies and reviews, approval profiles and plans, and comparison with peer and aspirant institutions, with more unconventional approaches, such as: perusal of graphic design blogs; monitoring of Interlibrary Loan (ILL) borrowing by graphic design students and faculty; and even use of Amazon reader reviews, where an active community of graphic designers share book lists and reviews. Graphic art and design by definition is a field concerned with visual knowledge in all formats, including not just streaming video and digital image databases, but print examples of graphic design, such as art books. Relevant interdisciplinary areas of interest include semiotics, gaming theory, information theory, color theory, and nonverbal communication. Curricula in design history generally cover major movements and schools, such as Art Nouveau, Bauhaus, and the Arts and Crafts movement, as well as modern influences on graphic design, such as graffiti and street art, psychedelia, and digital expressionism (Erickson, 2007).

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