

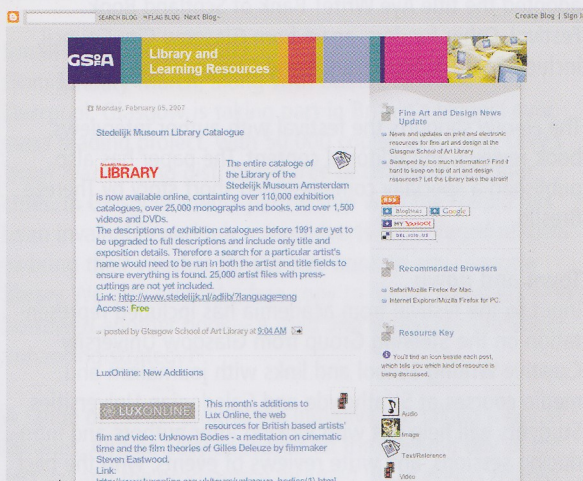
How can the academic library continually update its staff and students on new resources, available both within the library and on the Web? How do we guide our readers towards high quality resources in their subject areas, and away from lower quality generic resources? At the Glasgow School of Art Library we have been asking ourselves these questions and others, and developing some innovative approaches to answering them.

Talking to both our academics and students, it had become clear that they found it difficult and daunting to keep on top of new resources in their teaching, learning or research areas. Students in particular found it difficult to differentiate between high and low quality resources available on the Web and elsewhere. At the GSA Library we have

Leading the way with style

A new current awareness service at the Glasgow School of Art Library harnesses the technologies of Web 2.0.

And, as you would expect, it is elegantly designed. *Duncan Chappell* explains.



always had a strong user support ethos, and we pride ourselves on the in-depth knowledge of our dedicated subject staff. We realised our challenge: to marry this professional knowledge and expertise with innovative technology in order to provide our readers with the kind of current awareness service they so obviously desired.

As an HE art school, our user demographic is wide-ranging and dynamic, but there is always one constant: our users think and work visually and find traditional textual approaches off-putting. To be well-received and used our current awareness service would need to be visually appealing, elegantly designed, and dynamic. We realised that today's Web 2.0 technologies could easily be harnessed to create and develop such a service.

Our recently launched current awareness blogs¹ for the subject areas of architecture, fine art and design are designed to provide our readers with a one-stop shop for high-quality resources available through the GSA Library or Web. Maintained by the our Subject Librarians, all

resources are assessed for quality, as well as relevance to GSA subject areas or research activities.

Features include:

- Regular postings of new and updated content
- RSS feed
- New Resources showcase
- A-Z list of high-quality resources
- Subject Librarian links
- Demo movies using Flash
- del.icio.us tags
- Post archives and blog search function
- Web, imagebank, and subject gateway search.

The blogs were designed and created using the free web-based Blogger² program. Pre-existing Blogger templates

were heavily customised and redesigned to allow us to create blogs that were full of information, yet maintained an elegant simplicity. Library branding was added, and the same colourful template used across our different blogs.

The design ethos has always been to make things as easy to understand and use as possible. All our postings are kept deliberately concise, whilst still conveying all the essential information. Postings are accompanied by a resource type icon which shows readers whether the resource being discussed is a text, image, video or audio resource. Our A-Z list of resources includes 'useful for' text which spells out exactly what the resource can be used for. Instead of PDF user guides, we have created dynamic Flash movies using Adobe Captivate³ that allow students to actually see the click paths for logging in to Athens, for example.

We've also incorporated scripting and coding that allow readers to search external resources directly from the blogs. Search boxes from Intute,⁴ SCRAN⁵ and Google Scholar⁶ have been included, whilst del.icio.us tags for all postings are also displayed. Subscription buttons for a number of news aggregators allow readers to easily subscribe to our RSS feed. The blog's search engines are customisable swikis with tag clouds created using Eureka⁷ Swicki:⁷ they allow us to guide our students to more relevant search results than they would otherwise encounter. In addition, the blogs have been heavily integrated into the Library's VLE course.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with many users commenting on the ease-of-use and clarity of presentation. The possibilities for future additional content and functionality are considerable, and we're already excited about the next stage in this essential new service. **IS**

Duncan Chappell is Fine Art and Design Librarian, Glasgow School of Art.

References

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- 3 www.adobe.com/products/captivate/
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