

CAGE Symposium 2003

Case Study Submission

Cage Symposium Theme: Changing Audience- Changing Practice

Project Description:

Qu'Appelle: Past/Present/ Future is an educational web site, funded by Virtual Museums of Canada, and produced in conjunction with the national touring exhibition *Qu'Appelle: A Tale of Two Valleys*. *Qu'Appelle: Past/Present/ Future* is a web site full of a rich horde of images, words and sounds intended to refute the prevailing myth that the national landscape (as depicted in the art that purports to represent it) is an "empty" one, devoid of people and, by implication, of history. *Qu'Appelle: Past/Present/ Future* was structured around interconnecting and branching themes examining the Valley as the focus of aboriginal and colonial settlement, industry and tourism, and issues of conservation and spirituality. <http://quappelle.mendel.ca/>

Contributed by:

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Profile of the Gallery:

The Mendel Art Gallery & Civic Conservatory opened officially on October 16, 1964. In 1967, the City of Saskatoon, in the Province of Saskatchewan, incorporated the Gallery as The Saskatoon Gallery and Conservatory Corporation. The Mendel Art Gallery is an autonomous freestanding organization, registered as a Canadian charity and certified under the Non-Profit Corporations Act of Saskatchewan. It is one of two public art museums designated by the Government of Saskatchewan (provincial museum's policy) as having provincial programming responsibilities. The Mendel has a collection of approximately 5000 artworks which features historical and contemporary work from a local, national and international perspective.

Goal:

General rationale:

This web site explores innovative ways of presenting contemporary and historical artwork and archival material and links them to ongoing oral histories. These links foster an understanding of cultural diversity in our society and expand the access and conceptual scope of exhibitions of art. In an era when, for many people, art has become a hermetic and difficult subject, it is imperative to find new ways of encouraging interpretation and relevance by bringing this material to the cultural present. While the Mendel Art Gallery has produced a major publication which includes essays by the curators of *Qu'Appelle: Tales of Two Valleys* and many reproductions of the work in the exhibition, the web site allows a considerable intertextual intervention in terms of oral histories and archival material that cannot be exhibited in the physical exhibition. A presentation of layered history and voices seems appropriate to the contemporary confluence of shifting cultural identities and their relation to geographic, and environmental realities.

Principles of Education:

Recognizing that people learn in different ways, this web site used a diverse system of Information delivery through text, audio/ visuals, and interactive and participatory means, in order to acknowledge the multiplicity of truths and the wealth of experience of people in the Qu'Appelle region, this web site is primarily constructed through their stories. This web site encourages self-directed intuitive learning,

Target Audience:

This web site reaches audiences of all ages and diverse cultures, with special emphasis on Saskatchewan youth, as well the arts, aboriginal and Metis communities. This web site was created as an educational tool, a dynamic way to present Saskatchewan history to our youth.

Strategies for Achieving Goals:

Because of the significance of the Qu'Appelle Valley as a microcosm of western settlement, we were able to engage a disparate spectrum of voices including those of European immigrants who settled the valley, as well as First nations and Métis peoples whose ancestors have been there for thousands of years. Stories from the San and Youth from the Valley are significant sections of this web site because they allow for active participation from various constituencies in the construction of history of the Qu'Appelle valley. Presenting Qu'Appelle's history in a web format allowed us to stay true to oral traditions by featuring elders and story tellers in audio and video clips. Our interactive timeline allows web visitors to move beyond a linear notion of history and discover the truly complex events and peoples who were/ are integral to the creation of Qu' Appelle.

Method:

Qu'Appelle: Past/Present/ Future was developed through a team planning approach. The core team constructed a flowchart that indicated activities; production and results-naming lead facilitators and timelines. This flowchart: served as the basis for the design of the web site. This approach allowed for an ever expanding, interconnected themes to be worked on by different team members at the same time. Our web master created a content management system- a database that resembled the flowchart that allowed us to plug in text, images, audio and visual elements as we received them. I would like to describe this planning approach and discuss the appropriateness of the web format for exploring Canadian history.

Evaluation:

Although constant informal evaluation occurred through our weekly team planning meetings, a contracted researcher in consultation with the project manager conducted a formal audience evaluation. This consisted of an on-line survey that produced quantitative data on navigation, usership, design and content of the web site. Several focus groups were asked to participate: youth, Saskatchewan aboriginal and French communities as well as museum / gallery employees. Overall the results of the survey were extremely positive.

Resources:

This web site involved a number of staff at the Mendel Art Gallery as well as contract curators, writers, artists and youth. Alexandra Stratulat-Programs Facilitator (at the time) was Project Manager for this web site, who with Noreen Neu Head of Public and Professional Programs (at the time)- initiated and facilitated the *Stories from the San* section and hired multimedia artist Jennifer Hamilton to lend teenagers from the Bert Fox Composite High School in the Youth from the Valley section of the web site. Curators of *Tales Of Two Valleys*- Dan Ring and Robert Stacey provided much of the information used in that section of the web site. Researcher and educator Blair Stonechild wrote on his considerable knowledge about Treaty-Four and the Pageants. Bob Boyer, Landom MacKenzie, Trevor Harriott and David Carpenter were a few of the artists and writers who contributed to this web site through text and audio and video clips. The Echo Valley Conference Centre (the old Fort San in Qu'Appelle)- was a useful resource to past residents of this famous historical site. Registrar Eve Koytk provided in depth information on certain works in the Mendel Art Gallery's collection exhibited on the Web site. The University of Saskatchewan section of the web site. The web site was designed and developed by Michael Zajac [michael@zajac.ca]. The audience evaluation was conducted and reported by Tammi Cainpbell.