

Art in a digital world.

Su Ballard and Rachel Gillies

Whether you are painting landscapes, sculpting stone with a hammer and chisel or cutting and pasting digital video, using the internet has become an unavoidable part of being a contemporary artist.



Rachel Gillies and Su Ballard

“Every art student now has to engage in some way with digital media,” says Dr Su Ballard, Principal Lecturer in Electronic Arts at the Otago Polytechnic School of Art. “Maybe they are a painter and want to find resources about an overseas artist. Maybe they want to put their own work on the internet so other people can see it.”

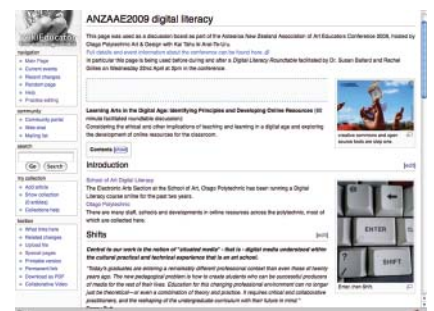
This reality of artistic life provided the stimulus for Ballard and Senior Art and Design Lecturer Rachel Gillies to develop a paper that teaches digital literacy for art students. In turn, their experiences developing the course, and Gillies’ experience teaching it, prompted the roundtable discussion they facilitated at the ANZAAE conference in April, considering the implications of teaching and learning in a digital age.

“It has become something of a cliché to say that the pace of technology threatens to leave people in the dust, but it is a real issue for educators”, says Gillies. She insists that it is not an insoluble problem, however. “If we focus on teaching software, it may be obsolete by the time students leave, so it’s important to teach broad skills that they can then apply to different situations. It’s largely about the wider context of art-making in a digital world.”

“That context is always changing,” Ballard continues. “They need to critically engage with it. If you download that song onto your ipod, can you put it in your video, and then can you show that video in a public space? If you put your photographs on Flickr, how are you going to feel if someone else uses them without your permission? Maybe you should read the terms and conditions before you upload them.”

The roundtable discussion was partly an opportunity for Ballard and Gillies to share some of the insights they have gained from three years of teaching the digital literacy paper. They are pleased with the outcomes of the paper so far. “Students have taken on the skills and developed them and made them their own”, says Gillies. “They are the users and creators of the media we introduced them to.”

“It has become something of a cliché to say that the pace of technology threatens to leave people in the dust, but it is a real issue for educators.”



http://wikieducator.org/ANZAAE2009_digital_literacy