

## **Faculty Information Literacy Stipend**

### **Final Report**

**Name:** Kerry Maguire

**Course:** ASPH 1300

**Semester:** Spring 2025

### **Introduction**

I decided to create the Visual Information Literacy assignment to address a critical gap in students' education in my Introduction to Photography course specifically. However, I believe that the following could be useful to any Introductory art course. Many students enter ASPH1300 without ever having interacted with an art book from the library. Most are new to fine art photography, and have not developed critical visual literacy skills necessary for understanding photography as both an art form and a mode of communication.

I was struck in a previous semester when I asked my students to each check out a book to bring back to the classroom, and a student shyly asked "but how do I check it out?" I realized that this assignment is as much about making students comfortable with the logistics of interacting with physical library resources as it is about using the resources for their creative research.

The information literacy learning goals directly support the course objectives of introducing students to photographic history and theory, developing visual literacy skills, and preparing students to analyze, discuss, and write about both their own and others' photographs.

In our contemporary digital landscape, we are inundated with innumerable photographs daily through social media, advertising, and digital communication. To keep sane in our image-saturated world, we often passively consume visual messages without analyzing their deeper meanings, construction, and potential manipulations. I heard feedback from a student during this project that they hadn't ever thought much about *how* and *why* other people take photographs. This assignment aimed to transform students from passive viewers into active interpreters capable of unpacking the layers of meaning embedded in a single image.

### **Description of the information literacy assignment or activities**

The "Annotation and Mapping" assignment was a multi-part project designed in collaboration with Kate Alleman, the Fine Art Librarian at Hamon Arts Library. The project consisted of four interconnected components:

### Part 1: Research

- Students visited the Hamon Arts Library photography collection to find three photographs from three different photographers in print sources (books or journals).
- They scanned images, created citations, and gathered biographical information about each photographer.
- Students then located one of their selected images in a digital resource (ArtStor or other online source) and compared the physical differences between print and digital versions.

### Part 2: Annotate an Image

- Students were assigned images selected by classmates from the library collection.
- Using Nigel Poor's mapping method developed at San Quentin State Prison, students analyzed images as "visual detectives," annotating directly on printed copies.
- This process encouraged deep thinking about visual language and photographic artistic decisions.

### Part 3: Swap!

- Students met with the original image selector to discuss the photographer and context.
- They compared annotations with the image's original context to explore multiple interpretations.
- This exercise demonstrated how varied interpretations are influenced by different knowledge backgrounds and experiences and got students talking to each other about photographs.

### Part 4: Anthology

- We created a digital anthology of annotated photographs with proper citations.
- The format (digital zine) was decided collaboratively by the class.

The assignment spanned two weeks with three dedicated class sessions, including two sessions held at the Hamon Arts Library with Kate Alleman's direct involvement.

**Method of assessment (Did the students do well? Demonstrated learning? Grades? What metrics did you use? Were students satisfied with their learning? What artifacts did the students produce?)**

I graded students on completion (pass/fail) for the following:

- Spending time with books
- Completing the Nigel Poor mapping exercise & narrative writing
- Pulling three compelling images from books, and trying to find one of these images in a digital source

- Correctly citing their images
- Seeking and writing biographical information about the photographer they chose

Students seemed engaged and satisfied with the results. I think the assignment felt more like a journey, where the students weren't quite sure where we were going to end up. Our motto was "trust the process!"

See appendix for artifacts and assignments.

## Results and impact on student learning

- I asked students to invest 30 minutes of their time simply perusing the collection. I asked them to bask in the books, rather than simply try to get an assignment done, saying that this could only be completed by investing time. I was pleased to see that many students stayed much longer, as they had become engrossed in a book of photographs.
- Something I was not anticipating is that many students were concerned that they were not reading the image "correctly" after doing the Nigel Poor exercise (attached) or following the Visual Literacy Guide's "[describing v.s. understanding](#)" prompts. I think I could improve the framing of the assignment to emphasize that the students' perspectives and intuition are as valuable as "factual" information, and that not understanding everything in an image can be exciting. Often, we do not and cannot know the entire context of an image.
- Students created fictional narratives about another student's chosen image, which moved them out of research mode into creation mode. This is a different kind of creation than what we usually do, which is taking photographs.

## Summary and next steps

Working with Kate Alleman and the Hamon Arts Library was invaluable to the success of this project. Our collaboration extended beyond this assignment, identifying broader needs such as developing a dedicated Visual Information Literacy guide and clearer guidance on image citations, which Kate had offered to create regardless of this stipend application outcome.

I would implement this assignment sequence again, with a few modifications. First, I would allocate more time for the library exploration phase, as students were genuinely engaged and could benefit from additional time with the physical collections. Second, I would create a more structured framework for the assignment as it became a little muddled (i.e. am I writing the narrative about my image, or the anonymous image I was given?)

The most successful aspects were the hands-on engagement with library resources and the collaborative interpretation exercises. Students demonstrated significant growth in their ability to analyze visual content critically, and many expressed appreciation for being introduced to photographers they might not have discovered otherwise.

For future iterations, I plan to incorporate students more into the design process of the publication. Because of time constraints, this semester we simply input their information into a template. I would also love to incorporate this assignment with a zine-making workshop.

This approach could be adapted for other studio art courses by focusing on medium-specific resources and interpretation strategies relevant to each discipline. The core emphasis on transforming passive consumption into active interpretation remains universally applicable across visual arts education.

**Appendix** (This includes the assignment sheet, rubric if used, and example(s) of student work.)

# Library & Mapping — Assignment Overview

## Assignment Overview

In our contemporary digital landscape, visual literacy has become an essential skill for navigating and critically understanding the world around us. We are daily bombarded with the millions of images that proliferate online through social media, advertising, news platforms, and digital communication. Yet often we passively consume these visual messages without truly analyzing their deeper meanings, construction, and potential manipulations. Just as we learn to read and interpret written text, we must develop sophisticated skills to "read" images: understanding composition, recognizing photographic techniques, interpreting visual rhetoric, and critically examining how images construct narratives and evoke emotions. Furthermore, it is important to understand where these images come from. Photography is not merely a neutral representation of reality, but a complex language of visual communication. Each photograph is a carefully constructed artifact that reflects the photographer's perspective, cultural context, technical choices, and intentional or unconscious biases. By developing visual literacy, we transform from passive viewers into active interpreters, capable of unpacking the layers of meaning embedded in a single image.

## Assignment Components

In this project, you will engage in a deep, critical exploration of photographic imagery through an annotative approach to visual literacy. We will collaborate with the Hamon Arts Library to do a deep dive into their photographic collection. Specifically, we will look at the print collection of photography books, focusing on artists who use photography as their main medium.

We will cite, analyze, and engage with your favorite photos from the collection in multiple ways. Inspired by Nigel Poor's Image Mapping method developed at San Quentin State Prison, this assignment challenges you to become a visual detective, uncovering layers of meaning, context, and personal interpretation within a single photographic image.

As a class, we will collaboratively create an anthology of our annotated photographs, including an image citation bibliography. This anthology will take a form decided on by the class. For example, it could be a zine, a website, a portfolio, or a book.

# Library Day 1



Published



Assign To



Edit



What to submit & how to submit:

1. Upload to [the submission form](https://smu.app.box.com/f/dfe9ae1769e94c3abe7ede33ec9d7578) (<https://smu.app.box.com/f/dfe9ae1769e94c3abe7ede33ec9d7578>)
  - (<https://smu.app.box.com/f/dfe9ae1769e94c3abe7ede33ec9d7578>) a total of four (4) photographs
    - your three (3) scanned photographs from print sources
    - your one (1) digital photograph. this should be a duplicate of one of the scanned photographs, but from a digital source.

In collaboration with the Fine Arts librarian, we will spend time in the Photography collection of the Hamon Arts Library.

## STEP 1

Spend a minimum of 30 minutes looking through the print collection of Photographic Books and periodicals. This step is an investment of *time*. There is no way to do this step more quickly.

## STEP 2

Your ultimate goal is to find three photographs that strike you. They can be photos you find interesting, confusing, beautiful, or even unsettling. These images must come from a print source such as a book or journal/magazine/periodical. Each of the three photos must be from a different book (the photographer can be the same, as long as the publication is different).

If you do not check out the book, you must note & remember the call number, author, and title so that you can find the book to reference later in the project.

## STEP 3

Pick one of your three images and try to find it in one of the library's digital resources such as ArtStor. If you cannot find it, ask the professor or librarian for assistance. As a last resort, you may do a web search. Save or cite the resource where you found your images so that you can reference it later.

## STEP 4

Scan your images using the KIC scanner in the library, or the scanners in the classrooms. There is a step-by-step scanning guide for the lab scanners on the [digital wiki](https://smu.box.com/s/4zree4q1stog1a08zzcajr2uiwwkm39b) (<https://smu.box.com/s/4zree4q1stog1a08zzcajr2uiwwkm39b>) (access also via QR code in classroom), and also a video on how to scan with the KIC scanner in high DPI. All photos must be scanned to at least 300dpi.

## STEP 5

Submit your images on Canvas by the due date.

Points 150

Submitting Nothing

Due	For	Available from	Until
Mar 26 at 9pm	Everyone	-	-

+ Create Rubric

🔍 Find Rubric

## Library Day 2

In this quiz you will address both the photo you annotated/mapped, and the one you scanned on Tuesday.

### **ANNOTATED/MAPPED photo:**

**Question 1:** Submit a narrative for your nigel poor mapping exercise.

**Question 2:** You will also upload a high-quality scan of your mapping photo (at least 400dpi, using classroom scanners is recommended).

If you need a refresher on the nigel poor mapping: [Nigel Poor Mapping Instructions.pdf](#) ↓

### **your chosen LIRBARY DAY 1 photo:**

**Question 3:** Cite your image

**Question 4:** Photographer biographic image



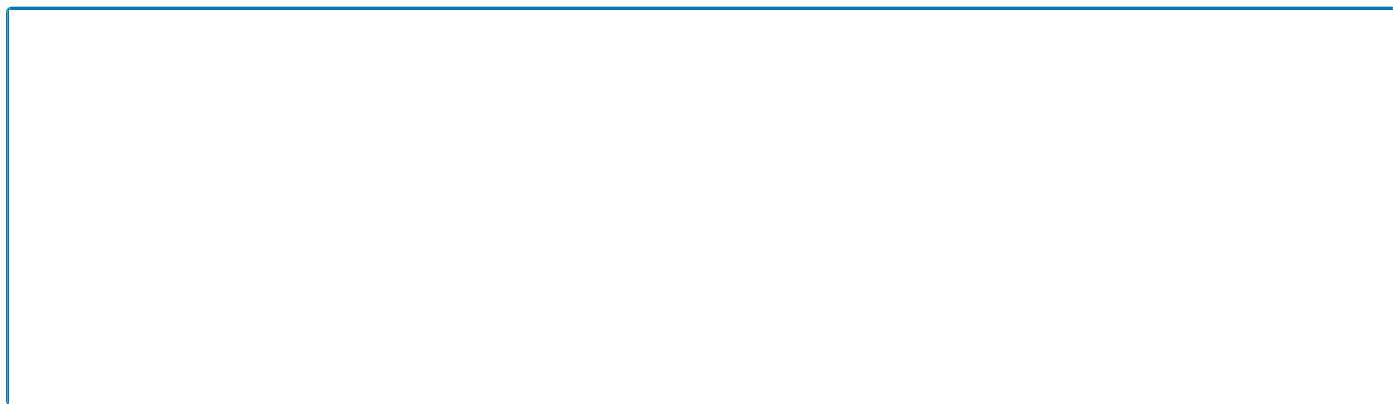
1

Essay 75 points

Narrative:

This applies to your ANNOTATED, MAPPED IMAGE

Use your notes and discoveries to write a narrative, completely imaginary or as "real" as you would like. You can be as creative as you like, and you can take any voice you like in the writing, such as an objective third person describing the image or a first person account by one of the subjects pictures. It can be anywhere from 75 words to 300 words. It could even be a poem, etc. This is not a writing class — I am not grading you on the success of your story. You will just receive a completion grade if you have done the assignment in full.



75 min / 300 max (word limit)

Must use at least 75 words

2

File Upload 75 points

This question type cannot be printed

Upload a high-quality scan of your ANNOTATED mapping photo (at least 400dpi, using classroom scanners is required. Do NOT use your phone or the KIC scanner. These will be printed out at very high quality so they need to look great. I will ask you to re-scan it if you do not submit a high quality scan.

You can add more annotations. If you have annotations of the back, please scan both sides.

[How to scan in the classroom](#) 



Drag n' Drop here or [Browse](#)

Maximum 1 file(s) allowed pdf, tiff, jpeg, jpg, png only!

3

Essay 20 points

This applies only to the image that you CHOSE and SCANNED IN [Library Day 1](#)

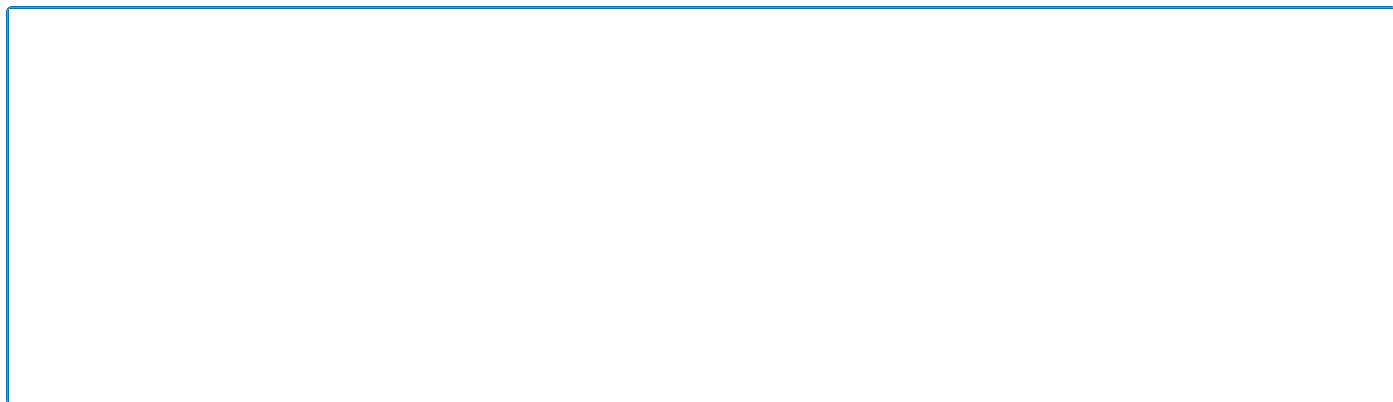
You only need the citation for the one image i chose, which you can see here: <https://smu.box.com/s/tu2tipmv34wvjlt76ppiegbxx1ht4rb4> ➞

Using the exact format on the Library Guide, please put the citation for **the image you chose on Tuesday** (which you can find in the folder above) in proper format.

This is not the one photo you annotated/mapped, but the one you got or scanned from the library that someone else annotated.

again, you only need the citation for the single image that it is in the [folder above](#). ➞

[SMU Library Guide: How to cite an image](#) ➞



4

Essay 20 points

This applies only to the image that you CHOSE and SCANNED IN [Library Day 1](#).

Tell us about the photo YOU chose (not the one you annotated, but the one in [this folder](#) ➞ with your name on it)

Who is the photographer?

When was the photograph taken?

Where was the photograph taken?

What are a few biographical details of the photographer?

