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Teaching Statement - December 2, 2017

Over my many years working in higher education, my teaching has always enabled active experience of the relationship between design and technology in the context of culture. Over the years, I have worked with students to examine the role of design in production, history, material culture, digital media, and information literacy. There are three different strongly interwoven threads in my philosophy: teaching **undergraduate and graduate students**, teaching other **faculty or staff** with whom I collaborate, and teaching the **public** through digital projects that have an educational function. For all three audiences, my main objective is to increase **critical thinking** about both the content of a subject and the technology we use in our approach. I also work to develop **problem-solving skills** through direct interaction with a variety of tools and methods. Few of my students will become digital librarians, designers, or historians: my job is to provide them with methods for forming questions and seeking answers about the world, themselves, and their work, helping with their critical approach to other very different projects in their future.

I find **experiential learning** in a lab setting to be beneficial, leaving room for supervised experimentation. Over the years, the nature of my "lab" has changed. It began with the classrooms, production studios, and costume shops in which I taught design and clothing construction at Vassar, Bard, Barnard, and Marist. Theatre has long provided a Makerspace for studying history, reproducing and reinterpreting settings from the past. As I became more involved with Vassar's research collection of historic clothing, that lab opened to a wider range of disciplines, such as History, Women's Studies, and French. **Multidisciplinarity** has always figured prominently both in my own work and in my teaching. One of my main reasons for pursuing an MSLIS degree in addition to my MFA was my interest in working on digital projects with students and faculty from a wider range of disciplines, increasing access to scholarly knowledge for a diverse public. I find the most valuable projects are those that provide the opportunity to see connections between different subjects. For the Historic Costume Preservation Workshop (HCPW) at Vassar, originally funded by an NEH grant and continued in subsequent years, I led students through weekly labs to work with 19th and 20th century clothing artifacts through all stages of documentation, stabilization, research, and mounting, resulting in a formal exhibition both in the gallery and online, with a detailed database. I quickly discovered that participants were more engaged when **working in groups** and discussing their unique perspectives of objects, regardless of their differences in prior knowledge or reticence in speaking in front of the whole class. I had students record quick videos of their examinations of each artifact as a way to capture this conversation more efficiently than a text-based blog post. I now understand the ways in which I must be a community organizer as much as a teacher, continuously switching students' roles within teams to expand their perspectives and skills and increase their

comfort with collaboration. As that work continued through digital projects, it moved to the computer lab and to a virtual lab online.

Project based work, related to a student or faculty member's own curiosity, makes **problem solving** more organic. If there is not enough time for students to make their own mistakes, I model common mistakes, with options for how to resolve them. As I have led students working on digital collection development and digital exhibitions at Vassar and for the HistoricDress.org project, their practice with Omeka, Filemaker, Photoshop, iMovie, Audacity, Object2VR, or Zotero has taught them about metadata, information architecture, image processing, and intellectual property.

My advocacy for the **audience**, using design to help shape experience of a performance, translated easily into my teaching. Some will learn better by reading, others by looking at images, taking notes, listening, talking, writing in a blog, or helping to teach a class. For many fields, students need to be exposed to spatial, 3D resources: difficult to bring into the classroom, but key to easing them into the shorthand of 2D representation. My research explores ways of transitioning between 2D, 3D, and verbal formats. In an online setting this includes not only the standard combination of text, 2D images, and video, but also interactive 3D models that allow students to rotate and zoom in on an object or move through a space. This is combined with "homework" in which students interact with real objects or spaces, such as a piece of clothing from their own closet or a building in their own neighborhood, to increase their observational skills when working with digital surrogates. I offer as many forms of differentiated instruction as appropriate, and help my students not only to identify which are most effective for them, but also which more challenging modes increase their growth. I have come to rely on creating online tutorials that over-scheduled faculty and students can view at their convenience, including screencasts and step-by-step guides with screenshots.

Another important feature of my work is how I help others to be aware of their own **information literacy** as both consumers and producers of information. My work with students and faculty building public collections at Vassar and at Smith has led me to develop plans for a series of workshops to explore this more formally, clearly mapped to standards developed by the Association of College and Research Libraries. As a series of loosely coupled modules taught in person or through screencasts and user guides, this series uses Omeka as a publishing platform to lead participants through the steps of sharing both new and existing content, evaluating if resources from other digital collections have rights permissions allowing for re-use, and citing such resources. Working to build a collection, students encounter the subjective acts that happen at every stage of creation. In creating metadata, they realize the power that exists in the words that they choose, to determine how an end-user may or may not be able to find a record. Once this is made visible to students, they are able to better appreciate such resources as consumers, and are more able to view such resources critically. In my research I explore ways of building transparency into digital collections, so that public users can more easily evaluate what they find, increasing clarity of the difference between an original primary source, its digital surrogate, and interpretation.

My **research** remains closely tied to my teaching, working to better represent material culture, and the human knowledge around it, in digital formats that can be more widely used in education. One main feature in my development of HistoricDress.org with librarians, archivists, curators, technologists, and costume historians across the country is our exploration of innovative tools to help novices develop expertise with identification of artifacts, moving more quickly into nuanced stages of analysis. In the balance of my work with students, with other faculty and staff, and with educational projects for the general public, each aspect feeds the others, increasing my dedication to enabling interactive experiences with design, technology, and culture for diverse learners.