



Expanding Museum Meanings:
Evaluating the University of Toronto's
AMICO University Testbed Experience

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Outline

I. Introduction and Background to the Project

II. Research Questions and Methodology

**III. Findings I: Exploring Evaluation Frameworks
for Museum Web Pages**

**IV. Findings II: Evaluating the Implementation of
the University of Toronto AMICO University
Testbed Project**


**V. Findings III: Evaluating the University of
Toronto AMICO University Testbed User Groups**

VI. Conclusion and Recommendations






Research Questions & Methodology

- A.
- *The Meta-Museum Meets the Meta-Library: An Examination of the Infrastructure Needed to Bring a Digital Art Image Library to a University Campus as a Pre-Test for the Management of a Variety of Public Users of Digital Art Museum Resources.*
 - Question: In what way does the proposed AMICO Digital Library, in terms of technical, design and content characteristics, function as a resource for the variety of university users and how would it be augmented to facilitate use?
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Research Questions & Methodology

B.

- *Making Museum Meanings from the Art Museum to the Web and Back: Defining: A New Learning Paradigm for the Museum Experience*
 - Question: What are the implications of using of an Art Museum-based digital image and information database in museum educational work delivered through the art museum?
 - **New Question**: How do the above issues factor into Museum web page evaluation?
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Methodology:

- 1. Expanding the Museological Frame of Evaluation**
 - Methods: Literature Analysis, Website Review**
 - 2. Evaluating the Implementation of the U. of T. AMICO University Testbed**
 - Methods: Assessment, Observation**
 - 3. Evaluating the University of Toronto AMICO University Testbed User Groups**
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Methodology:

User Groups:

Methodology

Online Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Focus Groups

Focus Groups

Participant Group

University of Toronto

Community

Students

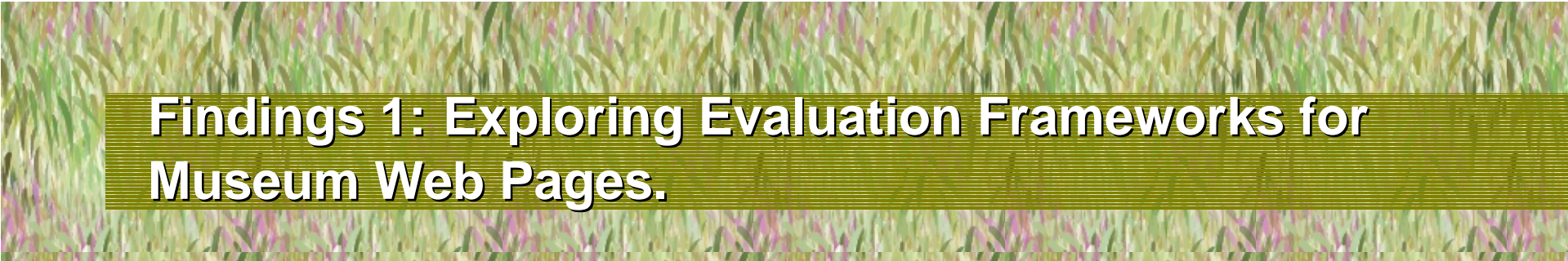
Staff and Faculty

Museum Studies

Community

Limitations:





Findings 1: Exploring Evaluation Frameworks for Museum Web Pages.

A. Usability Elements

B. The Museological Purpose

C. Object, Research and Information Based Elements

D. People and Meaning Oriented Elements

E. Museological and Power Oriented Elements




A. Usability Elements

- Information content, file size, no. of links to related sites
 - Communciation properties: pattern of hyperlinks structure or hierarchy of information design
 - Cyberambiance: page ration to image, download speed/time
 - File distribution, characterizing structural complexity
 - File Updates, characterizing site dynamic




B. The Museological Purpose

- “Electronic Brochure”, Marketing
 - Museum Replication
 - Educational “Interactive”
 - Virtual Museum or Exhibition, etc.
 - Meta-Museum- Portal
 - Professional Resources
 - E Commerce
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C. Object, Research and Information Based Elements:

- content issues: amount, quality, thoroughness, accuracy, academic depth and authority
 - communication properties: information structure, pattern and depth of hyperlinks
 - accessibility such as navigation and design elements
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D. People and Meaning Oriented Elements:

- interactivity elements, in which the user or visitor influences the outcome of their use of the site
 - feedback or conversation
 - application of learning theory, such as the provision of multiple entry points of the facilitation of multiple interpretations for personal construction of knowledge or meaning
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E. Museological Power Oriented Elements

- Power: voice(s); whose voice
 - Visitor participation: in creating the museum experience
 - Museological transparency: discussion of museum functions and de-mystification of the museum;
 - Museum context: history of museum, collections, objects & provenance, public program, organization etc.
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E. Museological Power Oriented Elements

- Meta-museological elements- critical perspectives across museum types, phenomena
 - Social context: placing the museum experience within larger social constructs
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Findings: II -Evaluating the Implementation of the Uof T AMICO University Testbed Project

- Ethics and Research Review
- Ease of Library set-up; difficulties of creating presence
- reluctance to participate:

Why?

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Hypotheses:

- a lack of interest on the part of faculty in new media
- a lack of support and/or reward system in the university structure for new media projects
- August timing of project-one-year limit
- a lack of technological infrastructure within the university
- limitations of volunteer team members already dramatically overextended in the area of new



Findings III: The Evaluation of U. of T. AMICO User Groups- “Their Voices”

1. On-line Questionnaire
2. Students- Focus Group
Questionnaire
3. Faculty/Staff-
4. Museum/ Museum Studies Group-


Conclusions & Recommendations:

1. Questions in the Delivery of the AMICO Database to Universities

- barriers of infrastructures
- time
- focused and concrete examples for use within academic work
- not everyone ready for AMICO Library




2. Museological Dimensions of the Use of an Art-Museum Digital Image and Information Database -

- The implications of learning theory, including constructivism, and design that appeals to a variety of learning styles and levels of exploration;
 - The desire for individuals to make meaning through participation in narrative in online applications, and the depth of content and narrative form necessary to facilitate this process; and
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Museological Dimensions...

- The potential for the integration of the AMICO Library into museum exhibitions and programs, and the ways in which it might be focused for the purposes of program
 - Most of all, the AMICO Library has enormous potential to represent some of the lessons of “new” museology, the postmodern discourse of museums that invites our museums to reconsider the nature of the message, the medium and the user in the museum experience.
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Underlying Issue

Museum web site evaluation: Expanding the Frame.

.Usability

.The Museological Purpose

.Object, Research and Information Based Evaluation

.People and Meaning Oriented Evaluation

.Museological, Power Oriented Evaluation.