

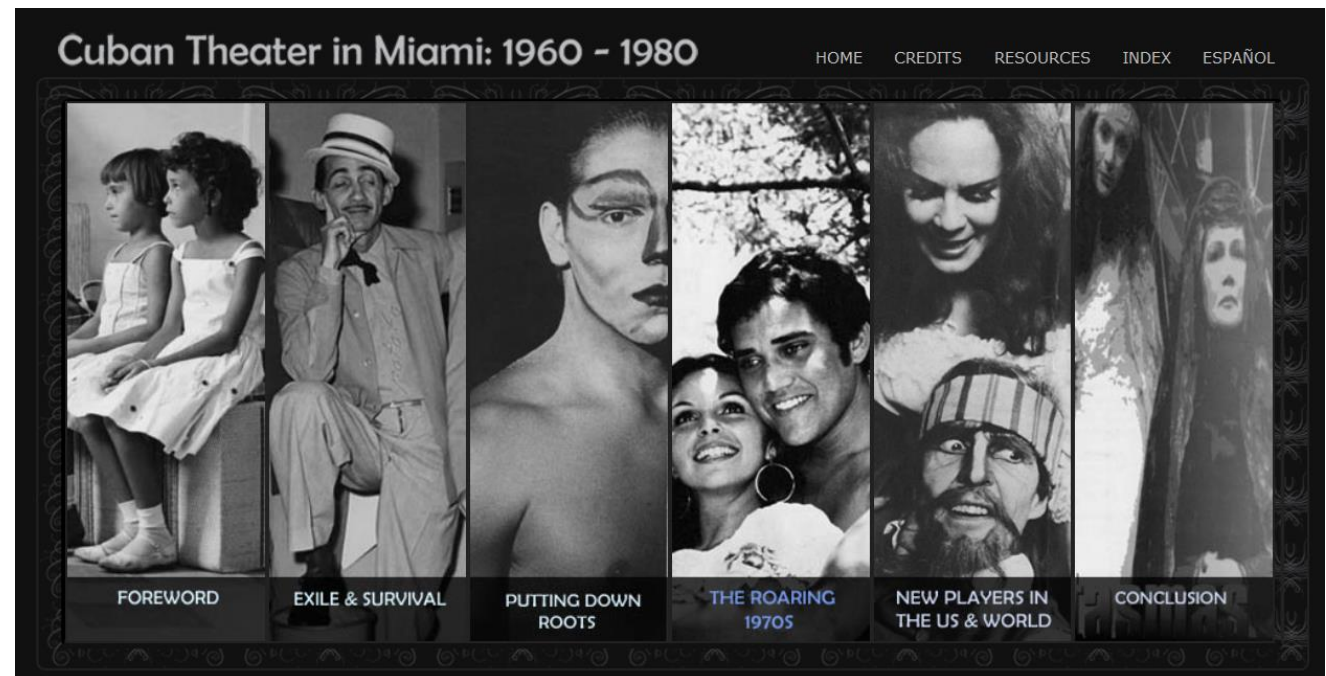


Lessons from Online Exhibitions

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Facing Up to the Complexity: Lessons From Online Exhibitions



Overview

1. Online Exhibitions
2. Multimodal Complexity
3. Assumptions behind Annotation Schemata
4. Making Results Comparable

Online Exhibitions

- More and more **exhibitions** take place **online**
- Online exhibitions are a relatively **young genre** whose changes mirror some of the developments of the internet
- **Multimodal corpus analysis** combines methods of corpus analysis with categories provided by multimodal semiotics
 - Which patterns define online exhibitions as a **multimodal genre**?
 - Which subtypes and **changes over time** can be found?
- **Work in progress**
 - Currently: development of annotation schema

Criteria for Judging Online Exhibitions

- An **award** for online exhibitions:
- American Book Prizes Current Exhibition Awards
 - Since 2001: division **Electronic Exhibitions**
- Complete list of submissions (c. 300 online exhibitions)
https://rbms.info/committees/exhibition_awards/

Criteria for Judging Online Exhibitions

Fantastic Worlds: Science and Fiction, 1780–1910

<http://library.si.edu/exhibition/fantastic-worlds>

Smithsonian Libraries (Washington DC)

This exhibition didn't win an award.

Criteria for Judging Online Exhibitions

Music, First and Last: Scores from the Sir Georg Solti Archive

<http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/loebmusic/exhibitions/solti/>

Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library at Harvard University

“This online exhibition had a clean, uncluttered design, and it was easy to navigate. The ability to access complete scores is good for scholarship, while the ability to easily access audio and video enhances the experience for the visitor.”

(Exhibition awards committee)

Criteria for Judging Online Exhibitions

Sugar and Visual Imagination in the Atlantic World, circa 1600–1860

http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/John_Carter_Brown_Library/exhibitions/sugar/index.html

John Carter Brown Library, Brown University

“Offering something different, [this electronic exhibition] feels like an online exhibition and not a mere representation of a physical exhibit. Technically very well done, its navigation is excellent [...]. Visually beautiful, the images have been chosen with great care and with a tasteful, evocative use of color. In addition, the use of ‘subtitles’ (in red italic font) adds an extra layer of curation.”

(Exhibition awards committee)

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Different Types of Online Exhibitions

1. **Conventional website:**
Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (1919–1933) (Institute of Sexology)
<http://www.magnus-hirschfeld.de/institut/>
2. **Curated arrangement:**
Music, First and Last: Scores from the Sir Georg Solti Archive
<http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/loebmusic/exhibitions/solti/>
3. **Individual storytelling:**
Künste im Exil (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek) (Arts in Exile)
<http://kuenste-im-exil.de>
4. **Virtual tour:**
Rijksmuseum Amsterdam – Virtual Tour
<http://www.amsterdam360.com/panos/rijksmuseum>

Online Exhibitions as Multimodal Artefacts

- Very high **complexity**
 - Variety of **semiotic resources**: images, videos, interactive elements, virtual reality elements
 - Young genre → low degree of **conventionalization**, quite diverse designs
 - Internal and external **links**, 3D elements, Geobrowsers, ...
 - Which **intermodal relations** (e.g. image-text) should be considered?
 - Should underlying structures (e.g. database functions) be considered?
- Layers of meaning
 - Exhibited artefacts already possess **meanings** in a culture (Siefkes 2015 on the "semantics of artefacts")
 - **Curation**: Curators select artefacts (often as exemplifications for larger contexts, e.g. artistic traditions) and arrange them
 - Additional meanings are added through descriptions, labels etc.
 - Spatial arrangement, storytelling, and framing of topics adds further meaning
- But **what is relevant?**
 - Hypotheses determine what is chosen for annotation

Genre-Specific Characteristics of Online Exhibitions

What makes an (online) exhibition an exhibition? This is by no means obvious!

- **Curation**: selection by implicit or explicit criteria
- **'Storytelling'**: Arrangement intended to mirror **spatial arrangements** of traditional exhibitions
- **Storytelling** / dramaturgy / **narrative**
- Exhibition **design** (aesthetic qualities, typography etc.)
- **Interactive** properties?

'Spatiality'

Cuban Theater in Miami: 1960–1980

<http://scholar.library.miami.edu/miamitheater>

Cuban Heritage Collection at the University of Miami Libraries

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The Unclear Status of Many Annotation Schemata

- Annotations obviously depend on various **assumptions**
- In practice annotation categories may be selected for **different reasons**. Annotation schemata can mirror
 - general **theoretical assumptions** about multimodal texts
 - assumptions about the **specific genre**
 - **hypotheses** and research questions of the study
- **Risk of incommensurability** between studies
- Current status of the 'discipline' of multimodality
 - many case studies of different genres / types
 - unclear **common foundations** and **connections** between studies

Annotation Schema for “Exhibit Presentation”

- Which modes are used for exhibit presentation?
 - Images
 - 1 / 2 / 3 or more images
 - 3D simulations
 - Complete / incomplete 3D simulations of exhibits
 - Can the visitor rotate the object / move around the object in the room / not change the viewpoint?
 - Language
 - Title / Name of exhibit [Y / N]
 - Verbal description [no / short / long]
 - Categorical metadata [Y / N]
 - Numerical information
 - Numerical metadata [Y / N]
 - Graphics / tables / maps
 - Are there graphics / tables / maps? [Y / N]
 - If yes: specific to an exhibit? [Y / N]
 - Music and sound
 - Is music used? (as part of the exhibit / background)
 - Is sound used? (as part of the exhibit / background)
- Intermodal relations
 - Does the verbal description explicitly refer to one / more than one image(s)?
 - Do all / some of the images of one exhibit have subtitles?
 - Verbal labels for parts of images / graphics / 3D objects? [Y / N]
- Layout / spatiality
 - One exhibit / various exhibits per page ('room')?
 - Is there a map showing the layout of the 'rooms' / exhibits in a 'room'?
 - Is a 'hanging' (order of the pictures) defined? [Y / N]

Example “Exhibit Presentation”

Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Selections from the University of Delaware Library Natural History Collection

<http://exhibits.lib.udel.edu/exhibits/show/animalvegetablemineral>

University of Delaware Library (Newark, DE)

Assumptions behind Annotation Schemata for “Exhibit Presentation”

- Certain modes are annotated
 - Are other modes assumed, but not annotated?
 - If a “systems network” is given, is it intended to be complete?
- Intermodality (relations between modes)
 - Which model of intermodal relations is assumed?
 - Which aspects are omitted?
- Which categories are tested as hypotheses? Which are assumed?
 - E.g. typology of exhibitions tested
- Which of the annotated categories are genre-specific?
 - Cf. the categories under “layout / spatiality”

Example “Narration & Storytelling”

The Greenwich Village Bookshop Door: A Portal to Bohemia,
1920–1925

<http://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/bookshopdoor/home.cfm#1>

Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin

Annotation Schema for “Narration and Storytelling”

- Which modes are used for narration & storytelling?
 - Language
 - Text that frames the whole exhibition [Y / N]
 - Texts that introduce specific topics [Y / N]
 - Images
 - Header image framing the whole exhibition? [Y / N]
 - Images for whole topics? [Y / N]
 - Colour
 - Do colours structure the exhibition? [Y / N]
 - Are there exhibit previews on higher levels? (cf. glances through the door into a room)
- Interaction and navigation
 - 1 / 2 / 3 or more navigation bars / menus?
 - 1 / 2 / 3 or more levels?
 - Is there a preferred viewing path?
 - Navigation icons / symbols (e.g. arrows)?
 - Internal / external links in exhibit descriptions?
- Search and categorization
 - Is there a search function integrated?
 - Is there a map indicating the exhibition layout?
 - Can artefacts be shown by category or metadata label (e.g. author, time, content features)? [Y / N]

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How to Create “Islands of Connected Results” (1)

Try to distinguish between

- **theoretical assumptions** regarding multimodality
 - Which modes / submodes are assumed / distinguished?
 - Which types of intermodal relations? (cf. Siefkes 2015)
 - How do you understand “mode”? (sign model / sign system / communication model)
- **genre-specific modelling** in the annotation system
 - Which modes occur in the genre?
 - How do they interact?
 - Genre-related functions
 - Conventions of production and perception
- **the specific focus caused by the hypotheses**
 - Selection of certain areas (out of a theoretical “general annotation schema”)
 - Specific perspective on the genre

How to Create “Islands of Connected Results” (2)

Your results will

- **test the hypotheses**, but also ...
- **be comparable to other studies** based on not-too-distant theoretical assumptions
 - Results can be compared if **theory differences** are in the open
 - Your results and others may complement each other
 - Theories become comparable, too! (via various aspects of their description)
- **help to model the genre**
 - Others can evaluate your decisions and build on them
 - E.g. if you don't need to annotate certain modes / intermodal relations, indicate whether they exist or not according to your assumptions
 - Your model of the genre may later be compared to others

Related Projects at the TU Chemnitz

- Project **The Digital Museum**
 - Corpus analysis of online exhibitions
 - Multimodal annotation
 - Clustering
- Project **MANUACT**
 - BMBF-funded project that includes cooperation with museums
 - <http://www.manuact.org/en/>
- Exhibition **Gesture – in the past, present, and future**
 - 17.11.2017 – 4.03.2018, Sächsisches Industriemuseum Chemnitz
 - <http://www.gesten-im-museum.de/home/en/>

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