

ALCS 8th Biennial Conference UCD Dublin 2010 *

*Communicating, Remembering, Reconstructing –
an Interdisciplinary Conference for Low Countries Studies*

Abstracts, 7 January 2010:

Theme 3: Technology-enabled learning and research

1. H. Louwse (Sheffield) and E. Verbaan (Nottingham)

**Close Encounter of the Virtual Kind. On student collaboration
and on how to conquer a Virtual Learning Environment**

Virtual Dutch is an inter-university teaching and learning initiative in Dutch Studies, involving four British universities: University College London (UCL), the University of Sheffield, the University of Cambridge and (since 2008) the University of Nottingham. Virtual Dutch was born in 2002 as one of ten projects supported by the University Council for Modern Languages. Its explicit aim was ‘to investigate models of collaborative activity across HE institutions that could be adopted by other less widely taught languages’.

Every year since 2002, as part of Virtual Dutch, Sheffield, UCL and Cambridge have delivered a number of joint teaching projects for undergraduate students in Dutch Studies. These collaborative projects are delivered for the most part using a Virtual Learning Environment and video conferencing. Over the years we have experimented with various platforms such as WebCT, Moodle and, recently, Clearspace/Jive SBS. In this presentation, we will discuss the specific needs and demands of collaborative learning in a virtual environment. We will share our experience and expertise which we built up over the past seven years in what is quite a unique educational set-up: the inter-institutional collaboration. We will offer an overview of our activities, sketch a theoretical context where considered helpful and share best practice.

This presentation will be relevant for anybody who takes an interest in innovative teaching and learning methods involving Virtual Learning Environments.

2. K. Kaldenbach (Independent Art Historian, Amsterdam*)

Dutch cultural history as presented on websites and in museums:

How digital presentations allow new ways of seeking worthwhile questions, interpretations and answers.

Modern art history teachers welcome the use of various electronic and Internet sources and apply interactive techniques. Many museums have also welcomed various innovative ways of using digital technology in order to present their stories, ideas and collections.

Today I will discuss a critical assessment of some of web sites and of electronic ways of presenting Dutch history and art history on the Internet and in museums.

1. A Vermeer web site created by Jonathan Janson will be discussed.

<http://www.essentialvermeer.com/>

2. And some highlights of another Vermeer site created by the present speaker.

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~kalden>

3. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam has created a wonderful web site presenting very large JPG images of many thousands of their prize possessions.

www.rijksmuseum.nl

4. Documents and objects as presented in the treasury of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague + Internet.

<http://www.kb.nl/galerie/100hoogtepunten/van1tot100.html>

5. Digital presentations such as shown in the Boijmans Museum, Rotterdam (2007-2009), inside on a large projection screen, allowing sorting and re-grouping of paintings by a wave of the hand. Plus the Pippi Longstocking Video project.

6. The Treasury in the basement of the new Stadsarchief building, Vijzelstraat in Amsterdam, De Bazel architecture.

<http://stadsarchief.amsterdam.nl/>

One may also learn from some mistakes made in the past, for example, of a museum and site with potentially great possibilities for communicating historical contents and storytelling, and sadly failing in both visual elements and the quality of text elements

7. The Vermeer Centre in Delft, housed in the rebuilt Guild of St Luke building.
<http://www.vermeerdelft.nl/194.pp>

I propose a number of **quality benchmarks** for future presentations with electronic means.

A. Deep professional knowledge as the starting point

B. Tell a limited story – a story anyone can mentally grasp and re-tell

C. Tell this short story by using rich means (with drama, anecdote, humor, contrast, conflict, tension). With passion.

D. Start with a clear Agenda / Menu so people know what they are going to get. Or can decide to walk on.

E. Awareness of the Δ triangular relationship that exists between

1) the institution / storyteller,

Δ

2) the objective
historical event /
object / contents

3) the client / reader / end user.

Both the storyteller and the reader should be enticed to seek worthwhile questions, interpretations and answers. The medium is the message, they say. The chosen format shapes the style of communication and therefore the communication itself.

F. Controversy => OK. It wakes people up.

G. Internet is fine, reproductions are fine but nothing beats the thrill of the REAL historic object.

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- Director, Private Art Tours, Amsterdam.
 - <http://www.xs4all.nl/~kalden/verm/fagel-dublin-lecturesENG.html>