

CURATION AS THE CREATION OF MEANING AND BEAUTY

BY NEIL VON HEUPT

Walking through a museum or gallery is a mind opening experience. It's so much more than just a collection of items. What's on display is likely only a fraction of what is available and it has been brought together for a purpose. An exhibition may highlight a particular genre or period of time. It may contrast two opposing styles or focus on a common element of multiple styles or the product of one artist.

This is the act of curation - taking aggregated objects and finding or even creating meaning and beauty, order and structure. All directed at an audience, with the curation responding to their known interests and needs or creating new concepts.

This purpose driven nature of curation is the key to its use both personally and in an organisation. Understanding your purpose will direct what you collect, how you curate it and how you make it available to your audience.

There is no shortage of content so, it is important to be intentional when you begin to collect content. Filtering the content for CRAP (Currency, Relevance, Authority and Purpose), with thanks

to Molly Beestrum, will begin to shape the content you collect. This shaping process can be done by being careful about who you listen to, and what you listen for.

Shape your feed

Choose carefully who you follow on social media and your feed can become a valuable stream of content. It's not just about the big names and thought leaders (although they are important as they have good filters of their own) but also about peers who are actively creating or finding and sharing new content. Keep some outliers and contrarians to avoid your feed being vanilla, and boring! Don't ignore suggested content either, it's based on a complex stalking algorithm that analyses what you look at.

Choose carefully what you listen for. Tune your mind to the topics, business needs and themes that you are interested in. Write a list of topics then as you skim through your feed the key words will jump out at you and you can slow down and engage more fully with the content.

Join the dots.



In the game of boxes, you start with a page covered in a grid of dots. Each person takes it in turn to join two dots. The goal is to join four dots to form a square, and to form the most squares. To win, you need to watch out for the opportunities to create and join multiple squares.

This is the act of curation. A good bookmarking tool like Diigo or Evernote will allow you to tag content with key words - connecting the dots between content. As you begin to make these connections, you can begin to see other connections in style, media and more.

From this curation and connection process you can then consider who you will connect the content with. Curation

without connection is just collection! On a personal level it may involve sharing content with specific people or groups using your awareness of their interests and needs. At an organisational level it may involve using system infrastructure to put the content that people need in places where they can access it.

Mind the gaps

As you curate content, you may also begin to notice gaps in your collection. Topics that you're just not seeing content on that you need to. This may drive you back to shaping who you listen to, but it may drive you to create proprietary content for a specific situation.

These connections between content and between people and content are what creates those aha moments when you walk through a gallery. Where you see things you've never noticed before, where a narrative becomes clear or the complexity of apparently simple objects becomes obvious. This is the creation of meaning and beauty through curation, and it's what keeps people coming back to both find what they know they need and to discover what they don't know that they need to know!

References

Beestrum, M and Vanderbilt University Library, 2016, *CRAP Test: Evaluating Websites: Welcome!* South Mountain Community College <http://libguides.southmountaincc.edu/CRAPtest>

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