COMMERCIAL ART

PROGRAM REVIEW FINAL REPORT

2021-2022

OCCUPATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Member	Position	Agency
Nicole Mohrey	Instructor	Eastern Center for Arts and Technology
Beth Brodovsky	Chairperson	Iris Creative Group
Carmina Cianciulli	Vice Chairperson	Tyler School of Art
Max Kohls	Member	Designer
Irene Maskaly	Member	Hussian College School of Art
Fred McCarthy	Member	Photography
Katrina Clowers Taylor	Member	Dirty Laundry
Nicole Klaski	Member	Student Representative
Lena Cardamone	Member	Student Representative

EXECUTIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE

Denise Lavery Frasca — Temple University Hospital

Labor Market Data Analysis Summary

Data from the U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, indicates expected growth in fields related to the Commercial Art program.

Art Directors Job Outlook, 2020-30

2020 Median Pay: $97,270 per year, $46.77 per hour

Job Outlook, 2020-30: 11% (Faster than average)

Craft and Fine Artists

2020 Median Pay: $49,120 per year, $23.62 per hour

Job Outlook, 2020-30: 14% (Faster than average)

Industrial Designers

2020 Median Pay: $71,640 per year, $34.44 per hour

Job Outlook, 2020-30: 6% (As fast as average)

Special Effects Artists and Animators

Quick Facts: Web Developers and Digital Designers

2020 Median Pay: $77,200 per year, $37.12 per hour

Job Outlook, 2020-30: 13% (Faster than average)

Web Developers and Digital Designers

2020 Median Pay: $77,700 per year, $37.36 per hour

Job Outlook 2020-30: 16% (much faster than average)

This data, identified by the COA OAC, represents illustrators folded into Craft and Fine Artists, desktop publishers and designers. Accurate data on professions using the skills of illustration, design and photography can be difficult to find. Graphic Design is a common

job title, however just as often all of these skills are utilized in other jobs. In reality, the professional pathways and prospects for an illustrator are completely different than for a fine artist. Illustrators are also often graphic designers, industrial designers and/or freelance artists. It is important to note that the term desktop publisher is not a current job title. Today's jobs are more likely to be UX designers, animators, and web designers than the categories that national data offers for job growth.

Many of our students aspire to move into roles as character artists and animators. They come to the COA program to get foundational skills. This is true for students with interests as wide ranging as fashion, interior and architectural design, and food photography. While not a stand-alone career objective in our program, many of our graduates make their living as photographers.

The most significant growth in design professions appears in app development and interactive design. These more technological aspects of design have a much faster than average growth.

Emerging Trends

There have been both subtle and significant shifts in the design landscape in the years since our previous Program Review. There is an ever-increasing need for professionals trained to translate ideas into visual design. What's new is the expectation that creative staff be versed in multiple areas of our industry. In many cases, the jobs have blurred lines from one skill set to another and to be proficient in only one skill can make a person less marketable.

This need for skilled designers spans marketing, entertainment, industrial, education and other industries. Though media and software are always evolving, strong design is still essential in the economy.

The Impact of the Pandemic

The pandemic has hit many of the areas of our industry in different ways. Large offices, including movie and animation productions, shut down entirely. Weddings were put on hold, impacting countless photographers. Yet in agencies and design studios, work often continues as usual with the ease of moving a laptop to a home office. Having a job that is portable and eligible for remote work has allowed for new flexibility in location and lifestyle for many in creative roles.

One interesting circumstance of the pandemic has been the rise in both hand-drawn and digital illustration. What may seem like a stylistic trend is actually a result of the pandemic restrictions on gathering in person. With limitations on the ability to conduct a photo shoot, companies turned to illustration to convey their messages. Additionally, there has been a rush of need for stock photography of people wearing masks and other Covid protocols.

Remote work has also extended into remote interviewing. While travel is beginning to come back, the pandemic and video conferencing tools made it possible to hire from

anywhere. This means that designers need to have their work available online in digital portfolios for art directors and other employers to view.

Infographics

An infographic is data turned into a story through the use of imagery. Infographics have been in use for over a hundred years, but recent years have seen a resurgence due to social media. Since our last program review, infographics are becoming even more simplified and more visual. They are being broken down into smaller bits of data presented as individual social posts. Most interestingly, they are being blended with movement, animation, and interactivity to help add context to the ideas they are conveying.

Social Commerce

Approximately 12 years into the social media landscape, things are looking very different. Video and animation are key elements in attracting attention online. A distinctive change is that in 2022, people are willing to make purchases directly from social sites, apps, and games. And social sites are growing. For many years YouTube has been the #2 search engine after Google. In January of 2022 Tik Tok surpassed Google and became #1 for search. Organic content now must compete for space and attention with a growing list of advertisers that have the ability to micro target users. For all these ads, different sizes are needed. This requires both design effort and ingenuity to create a cohesive campaign with elements that work together whether they are 1" wide or 10' tall.

Mobile, Web and App Development

As more business shifts online, the interfaces we interact with become critical. User Interface (UI) and User Experience (UX) design is becoming a bigger field and career path. These are the people that decide what fonts, colors and imagery are on a page. But they also research and test what works best to help people find what they are looking for and to take the actions the site owner wants.

NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens)

One of the newest and most fascinating developments over the last three years is the emergence of NFTs. This is a digital way to verify that a digital file is an original as opposed to a copy. Currently artists are selling work and in fact creating works specifically to be sold as NFTs - some in the millions. It's yet to be seen if this is a fad or the beginning of a new way to value art.

Augmented and Virtual Reality

These tools for bringing the digital world to life were once the imaginings of Sci Fi authors. Today they are pervading media from advertising to gaming and even culture and education. Installations have been seen in locations from Times Square billboards to museums. Nonprofits are using the technology to help donors imagine what life is like for the people they support. The current Van Gogh exhibit includes a virtual reality VIP experience. Advertisers are using it to shock and awe. Augmented reality puts a digital layer over a physical space. Virtually reality takes the viewer into a 3D virtual experience. These techniques offer a much more heightened sense of interaction. Websites, apps, kiosk interfaces and more technologies have evolved to the point of providing a custom user experience in response to data input. This allows users to create the digital experience they want for entertainment or information. Users are beginning to expect to have a personal experience when using media. Design now needs to accommodate guiding a user down different paths or guiding them to the information they seek.

Accessibility

Over the last three years, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have become strategic priorities for countless businesses and organizations. Accessibility is a term used to describe how to make a website or other traditionally visual media usable by people with disabilities or challenges such as color blindness, seizures, and sensory disorders. There is now an entire specialty devoted to identifying ways for visuals to be adapted to accommodate any user. It has been noted that there are people who specialize in seeking out non-compliant sites and suing the owners, so it is expected that accessibility will become a priority for many businesses in the future.

Hand lettering

Fonts that look more personal and unique have been in demand for several years. Today, technologies such as Bird Font and Thankster allow designers to create fonts and typeset materials from their own handwriting or font design. Introducing the mechanics of font structure helps students appreciate the differences and impact of fonts and typography.

Photography

The technology and tools of photography have changed more than any other in design. Studios are focusing on unique settings and versatility. The ability to easily change to meet the needs of different clients and set ups is critical. Backdrops now include lay-flat tiles for portability and flexibility. The biggest shift is away from DSLR cameras and to mirrorless cameras. DSLR cameras have a reflex mirror inside them, which bounces light up into the optical viewfinder. With mirrorless cameras, light goes directly into the image sensor. Viewfinders on mirrorless cameras are electronic and show the same preview of the image that you'd see on the LCD screen. Whether camera manufacturers will continue to make new DSLRs remains to be seen, but it is expected that they will become rarer as the new technology takes over. Large camera companies like Nikon and Canon have already announced they will no longer be producing traditional DSLR's and making and developing mirrorless cameras only moving forward.

Advertising is Everywhere

Promotional space is no longer just printed or digital. It is now almost anywhere you can imagine. With digital technologies evolving in outdoor media, ads are no longer contained to traditional billboards and bus shelters. Almost anything can now be advertising, from the aisles at the grocery store to the coupons you receive on your phone when you walk through a digital geofence of a store you follow. Designers can utilize everything from cars, trucks, or fleets of vehicles to stair treads as places to promote, persuade or inform.

Typography

Web typography has come far in the last five years. Previously, web fonts were limited to what any user would already have installed on their computer. Now there are open-source fonts, Google web fonts and technology to embed a font in a website. This allows for more choices in online design and the ability to have consistency across print and digital design.

Required Skills for Employment

Trends in industry and the need for proficiency across multiple disciplines have led to our industry requiring employees to have a higher education. While we have some articulation agreements, we need to increase the number of agreements as well as promote that we have them. While we continue to work on these partnerships, the drop in enrollment has made these agreements more difficult to initiate, as colleges want to protect their credit hour generation.

As an OAC we feel it is important to continue to move forward on such partnerships. With a new position recently instituted at EASTERN, Hayley Granacher as School to Career Coordinator will be working to assist students moving into both post-secondary and the workplace. It is hopeful that schools like MCCC and others may partner with COA specifically as they have with other programs at EASTERN. This year, schools like Penn State's School of Technology have been more willing to work with us for summer program scholarships moving forward.

Most students leaving our program are looking to get a degree when they leave EASTERN, but some aspire to get a job in other program areas. While there are some businesses that will employ an EASTERN alumnus immediately, higher paying jobs require higher education. Many of our OAC members note the importance of strength in more than creativity and the design skills of needed software, but also the need for work ethic, strong background in communication skills, problem solving, clear communication, and being motivated in a team environment.

Many employers are seeking ‘marketers’ or ‘communication coordinators’, not just designers; designers need to have more than just graphic design, they need to be more than one note in smaller businesses. Only large agencies or corporations can have people power to hire for specific positions exclusively.

Recommendations

Our students need to be prepared to work with the current skills, technologies and equipment that are found in the workplace today. While most of the COA students who want to pursue a career in design will leave EASTERN to attend a post-secondary program, they need to be trained and prepared for what’s next.

Name Change

One significant request is that the program name change from Commercial Art to Design, Photography and Illustration be approved and adopted.

Commercial Art is a term that is more than two decades out of date. High school students do not understand it. Parents who understand it are not impressed by a program with a 60’s and 70’s era title.

Changing our name is an important step in attracting the students who will value this experience. Giving them the chance to explore a career in design before investing in an expensive college program is an incredible opportunity and the program should be promoting its relevance to the interest of today’s students.

This change has been discussed extensively by the OAC over the last three years, and we are in full agreement regarding its necessity. The name change would assist in clarifying the objectives of the program & what specifically we do in our industry as well as here at EASTERN. It will allow us to recruit significantly more effectively.

Photography Equipment

Our computers and printers have been on a three-year lifecycle rotation for more than a decade. In this program review, we realized that our photography equipment has not received the same treatment.

The photography equipment is dated, damaged, and is not current. The backdrop systems are difficult to maneuver, and their poor condition makes them dangerous for both staff and students to use. This leaves students without the proper tools for learning. Because of this, the instructors are additionally required to create constant workarounds when the equipment the students need is broken or unavailable. It has reached a point where the repair of the equipment costs more than replacement. Our primary request for this program review is to update and incorporate the photography equipment into a replacement life cycle management plan.

Initiating a lifecycle for photo equipment and an ongoing equipment list incorporating dates will ensure the equipment stays current. The Occupational Advisory Committee recommends no less than 12 cameras be purchased throughout the phases of the Program Review to allow a variety of instruction and experiences for students. These cameras need to be stored safely in a lockable, airtight cabinet to maintain condition and inventoried appropriately to maintain an accurate lifecycle.

Deciding on a better, safer system for versatility of backdrops for changing paper and/or fabric backdrops will ensure safety and industry standard. After researching different studios and schools, we are recommending a motorized backdrop lift system. We found a noiseless deluxe roller system is available in our 10-foot-wide size. This backdrop lift system can be mounted to our studio ceiling. This system features a quick-release roller connection and a remote-control switch box with cord. To maintain our ongoing versatility of different backdrops, we recommend the 8-roller system for both portrait studios.

Photo Lights

With recommendation from post-secondary professionals from Tyler School of Art and other Career and Technical Schools in PA, lighting is broken down into continuous lights and strobes, which are flash units. Today, there are great continuous LED light system panels that are light, durable, and highly adjustable, especially for color temperature. Godox kits are popular, along with other growing brands. LED panels are a field that has grown a lot in the last several years. Such panels are helpful in that students can see what they're getting and make lighting less intimidating. Depending upon how they're used and how often they're used, LED lights can have more versatility as well as easy-to-use equipment that is also cost effective.

Fallen out of favor are what are commonly called "hot lights" or continuous halogen lamps. These lights can be dangerous because they're hot enough to cause fires, burn people, melt things, and they use a lot of electricity. LEDs don't have the same problems.

For strobe systems, there are many options. Local post-secondary schools favor Alien Bees which are light, portable, and easy to use with a simple electric wall plug. They synchronize with each other automatically. DynaLites and ProFoto are both a bit bulkier and require a power source which is often a large battery pack. They're a little more complex and can be intimidating as a result. Older battery systems used to be large and heavy (like car batteries), but those, too, have changed a lot in the last few years and portable packs are now getting more common. The benefit of strobe systems is that they supply significantly greater amounts of light than continuous light or LED setups, so you have more lighting options, but they are more complex and take a little longer to learn because you can't judge results without looking at the picture first. They also can require the use (and understanding) of a strobe light meter which can take time for some students to master.

Also, a small batch of portable camera flash units would be useful to have. Most on-camera units today can synchronize with other flash units that are off the camera, so for very little money, you can have a very portable, very functional studio.

One option these days is to use something like a wireless tether which could be connected to a camera. Then, using a smartphone or tablet, you can completely control the camera and view the resulting picture. It can be used with Apple TV installed in the classroom (or lighting studio); what appears on the tablet can be simultaneously projected on the screen so every student can see exactly what the camera sees. This can be a great teaching tool.

Timelines & Phases

Phase 1 - School Year 2022-2023

Rebranding of Program-Signage etc. $2000

Nikon Mirrorless Camera w/ Professional grade lens $2200

Sony Mirrorless Camera w/ mid-grade grade Lens $1600

Nikon Mirrorless Camera w/ lens kit $1900

Medium Storage with Adjustable Shelf/Closet for Cameras $769
29-1/2 x 24 x 66-3/4 Inches

Track Lighting Kit $97
- Globe Electric Kearney 46" width, 6 Light

2 - GVM 800D-RGB LED Studio 2-Video Light Kit $229 $458
BH #GV800DRGB2L • MFR #800D-RGB-2L

2- Digital Drawing Tablets $299 each $597
HUION KAMVAS Pro 13 GT-133 Graphics Drawing Monitor with Full Lamination Screen Battery-Free Stylus 8192 Pen Pressure - 13.3 in Pen Tablet Display with Stand for Linux, Windows, and Mac

TOTAL $9,621

Phase 2 - School Year 2023-2024

2- Digital Drawing Tablets - $299 each $597
HUION KAMVAS Pro 13 GT-133 Graphics Drawing Monitor with Full Lamination Screen Battery-Free Stylus 8192 Pen Pressure - 13.3 in Pen Tablet Display with Stand for Linux, Windows, and Mac

Canon Mirrorless Camera w/out stabilizer $2100

2 Fuji Mirrorless Cameras w/Lens - $1400 each $2800

Backdrop System Studio #1 - Backdrop Roller System ABL-DX $4753
Deluxe motorized backdrop lift system has noiseless motors mounted inside each roller. The deluxe roller system is available in sizes ranging from 8 foot wide to 12 foot wide. This backdrop lift system can be mounted to your studio ceiling, however if you have a drop ceiling you may need to install some type of reinforcement due to the weight. This system features quick-release roller connections and a remote-control switch box with 12' cord.

TOTAL $10,250

Phase 3 - School Year 2024-2025

Backdrop System Studio #2 - Backdrop Roller System ABL-DX $4753
Deluxe motorized backdrop lift system has noiseless motors mounted inside each roller. The deluxe roller system is available in sizes ranging from 8 foot wide to 12 foot wide. This backdrop lift system can be mounted to your studio ceiling, however if you have a drop ceiling you may need to install some type of reinforcement due to the weight. This system features quick-release roller connections and a remote-control switch box with 12' cord.

Fuji Camera with mid-grade lens	$1400
2- Cannon Cameras High-end w/stabilizer	$5600
	TOTAL $11,753

Grand Total: $31,624