

Statement on evaluating the creative work of visual communication and professional track faculty

Tenure and promotion committees at academic institutions may at times face the task of evaluating a faculty member based on creative work rather than on more traditional academic research in published form. In visual communication areas, creative work will most often be in the areas of film, video and photography, and graphics, design and illustration in both print and digital platforms, including website and app design, interactive graphics and animation.

Work of this nature may have been done to tell stories, either documentary or fictional, to present journalism or information in a visual way, or for reasons other than purely academic pursuits: It may be professional, even commercial, i.e., done for paying clients or investors, it may be in the pursuit of technical experimentation in the given medium, or it may be purely artistic expression. And its distribution, unlike publication in established journals, may be through a variety of platforms and venues, making it more difficult to evaluate its audience reach and value to its field.

Our division would like to affirm the value of creative work to the advancement of education and to the enrichment of academic institutions, fully as important as academic research.

Creative work is a necessary pursuit by faculty in visual fields in order to remain knowledgeable, competent and current in their areas and to make them more effective teachers. This is especially true of faculty whose main credentials are derived from their professional experience, and whose value as teachers is due to their professional experience.

Creative work should be evaluated on such criteria as:

- Contribution to the creator's field: Does it present new ideas and approaches, and does it advance the field in ways that are of value to other members of the field?
- Venue and audience reach: Analogous to a publication's reputation, is it presented in a way that makes it accessible to its intended audience, and so that other members of the profession can review it and have the opportunity to both learn from and critique it?
- Innovative Presentation: Does it provide a unique intellectual, revelatory or emotional experience to its audience?
- Leveraging the particular strengths of visual communication: Does it present ideas or information in a stronger, clearer and/or more accessible way than could be expressed in text or in other traditional media?

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- Professional development: Does it help the faculty member(s) who created it to improve their knowledge and expertise in their field, and aid them in being better teachers?
- Advancement of the field of visual communication: Does it provide a new experience and help those outside the field better understand the field's value to communication?

An excellent work of creative scholarship often takes more time and thought than traditional research and should be valued as much. If it meets any of the above criteria, then it is contributing to your institution's educational advancement and reputation, and should count positively toward its creator's tenure and promotion.

This statement is endorsed by the members of the Visual Communication Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Adopted by Division membership August 7, 2015 in San Francisco, California.