

***This week, I would like you to reflect on the role of visual resources curators and their work in the field of art information. How do visual resources curators contribute to the description and access of images, and why does that matter? What are roles do visual resource centers and institutional image collections play in teaching at post-secondary institutions, and how have they changed in the evolution from slide collections to digital images? What are the differences between digitization and digital preservation, and what is the purpose and impact of both processes? (These are just examples of things to reflect on; you don't need to address all of them!) In your post, please include at least three specific examples that help you answer some of the above questions from your readings or recordings so far, at least two of which should come from your Week 5 assigned or recommended readings or recordings.***

The role of visual resource curators is varied and multi-disciplinary. Archives and catalogs of physical artifacts, such as slides, film reels, and photographs, are fragile and require careful handling to preserve their integrity. (Burns, 2017). There is an argument as to whether or not the digitized version(s) of physical objects (such as slides) removes the context of the items and how this lack of interactivity might cheapen the experience. It is vital that visual resource curators can properly emphasize the point and importance of these objects, regardless of their physical status.

Understanding fair use is also an important and vital part of curating the information of yesteryear (Wagner and Kohl, 2012). Without extensive knowledge of existing digital and physical permissions, students and instructors can and do struggle to share visual materials without breaking copyright laws. Copyright laws and regulations for media, particularly visual arts, can be fraught with loopholes and strange exceptions.

Art museums have increasingly become places where visual resource curators work in tandem with students and instructors to reinforce core foundational guidance. Schoen (2017) also describes some digitization best practices that are vital for visual resource curators to follow and understand. As 59 percent of these individuals work in higher education, curators must understand the correct use of all the resources available to them, so that students and instructors know proper protocol(s). While visual resource curators can work in almost any archival environment, typically, as stated above, their primary purpose is to educate in a higher learning environment.



Fig 1. The Treachery of Images by René Magritte.

### **References**

Burns, J. E. (2017). The Aura of Materiality: Digital Surrogacy and the Preservation of Photographic Archives. *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America*, 36(1), 1-8. <https://doi-org.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/10.1086/691368>

Schoen, M. (2017). Visual resources: from analogue to digital and beyond. In Dyki, J. & Glassman, P. (Eds.), *The Handbook of Art and Design Librarianship* (2nd ed., pp. 53-61).

Wagner, G., & Kohl, A. T. (2011). Visual Resources Association: Statement on the Fair Use of Images for Teaching, Research and Study. *Visual Resources Association Bulletin*, 38(1). <https://online.vraweb.org/index.php/vrab/article/view/139/136>