

# VRA EAC Community Hour

Wednesday, October 26 2:00-3:00pm EDT / 11:00am-12:00pm PDT

## Topic: Personal & Professional Positionality

**Guest:** Sara Schumacher

Sara Schumacher is the Architecture Image Librarian at Texas Tech University. Her research interests include visual literacy instruction, ethics, and bias.

**Moderators:** Lesley Chapman and Lael Ensor-Bennett

- Please keep your microphones muted--please use a reaction, raise your hand, or use the chat to indicate that you would like to speak.
- **Video not required**, virtual backgrounds welcome (be mindful of your virtual background selections). Feel free to add your pronouns to your Zoom name.
  - [How to change your name during a Zoom meeting](#)
  - How to provide captions via [PowerPoint](#) or [Google Slides live captions](#)
    - <https://webcaptioner.com/> - Free Captioning Right In Your Browser
- If you'd like to ask a question anonymously, please send your question through a private chat to any moderators listed above.
- **Community Hours are not recorded** for the sake of attendees' privacy and so that all attendees feel safe to express any concerns or questions they may have on various topics.

**Attendees are encouraged to take notes under the [‘Community Notes’](#) section of this document.**

EAC webpage: <http://vraweb.org/about/committees/equitableaction/>

EAC email: [ea@vraweb.org](mailto:ea@vraweb.org)

Submit a topic for a future Community Hour: <https://forms.gle/fENKfkEJjAC6Fgew5>

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Thank you! [Visual Resources Association's Equitable Action Committee](#)

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## Community Notes:

- Welcome
- See [Jamboard for Community Hour](#)
- Board 2
  - We may transition from different places of power and privilege depending on what we are doing or who we are with at a given time
  - Good to reflect on these aspects in the workplace
- Board 3
  - As Sara worked on this for the Framework, investigated a deeper dive in how can explain to students
  - All of these items are not 1:1, example: "ease of communication," this encompasses both native language, but also experience and training in written communication, hearing impairments or experience with, experience with other items that can affect communication (ex. dyslexia)
  - All of our individual positions will not be the same as any one else's, just as our experience is different
- Board 4: Wheel of Power/Privilege
  - Everyone who felt comfortable was able to annotate the wheel
  - Interesting because can start by just putting a check mark in a section, but some you may feel close to a borderline or less in a specific box. Some areas are easier to categorize than others
  - Each wedge may have different grading depending on the setting, ex. academic setting, may even matter not just have degree but where got, etc.
  - Or even if you fit into a box, you have family who do not and that affects your own positionality
  - Would be nice to add one like a social safety net--students who may not have family or support network
  - This is an interesting perspective. The fact that we see categories within a category (like education) says something about the overall positionality of this gathering
  - Like this tool because makes you confront certain things and putting yourself in power to find your responsibility
  - But may not help you understand impact
- Board 5: Positionality Map
  - Not exhaustive, Board 6 lets you choose your own categories

- Let's you place where you fit in a category, but the second tier you can think about how those positions affect your life and can do a 3rd tier with emotions and impact on your life
  - Ex. Sexual orientation = heterosexual --> accepted in most spaces in our culture, do not need to justify self, no fear of affection in public
- Brainstorm facets that may be applicable to us as visual resources professionals, see Board 6
  - Some of us not encouraged to do work like this, sometimes it is okay and some times not at our institutions
  - What power do we have to initiate change in an institution?
- Board 7
  - How we can use our own reflections on positionality to show how we can talk about images
  - Sara uses this image in class
  - When show image in class, ask students to share words that come to mind when look at this image
  - Difference between 1st and 3rd year students was very notable
    - 1st: words like "very twisting", "high"
    - 3rd year: architectural terms
  - Old teaching model, those who maybe felt an image was threatening or inspired a feeling were told "Let's not put our personal interpretations on things." "Not about your interpretation but how it is supposed to be interpreted," so interesting if responses change as students learn more about the canon. Students are indoctrinated quickly about what an image is trying to do and for who
  - Then, let's look at it from different perspectives:
    - Not inviting if have mobility concerns--think: is this an inviting building for me?
    - What is our reaction to the person in the image on their phone? Are our reactions different than five years ago?
- Board 8
  - What facets of our positionality occur?
    - Where do these images come from? Is it okay to take these photos?
    - Our very specific experiences can cause very specific reactions to images like this
    - If think mostly about architecture, may miss nature
    - Experience with farms and farm animals/horses may affect
- Board 9
  - How would this be different if metadata not there? Try this without identifying information? See how affects reactions
- How might we think about our own collections? Anything sparked?
  - How fascinating how our own lived experiences really changed how we all see the same image--impactful
  - Students respond well to that realization, great reactions with students, they like to think about these things

- With architecture, how we experience space based on our lived experience, where we have lived and worked or visited
- Visual language of certain types of buildings are standard and those may be structures of power, so how it affects different folks to view them
- Difficult to do the positionality exercise with students first because could be triggering for some students depending on whether they are in positions of less power. And can be confusion with own identity with social positions--these facets are not our own personal identity. Can be good to start with your own positionality and not ask them to share, but they may feel more comfortable doing so if you have to start out
- Project at one school to design a library, but now rethinking how present this--how might a person feel in a particular space versus another
- Very helpful in awareness of what images we are choosing and what we are not thinking about
- From visual literacy regional workshop, if working with students with an image, draw a T, on one side put what see in the image and the other what it makes you feel or is inferred. Can help to separate out if want to have folks share their experiences
  - Could add to it, what do you imagine others may see
- With architecture students, they are creating images, so need to think about how others, clients or professors, etc. will look at the images
- Thank you, Sara!!!!

## Resources:

### [Jamboard for Community Hour](#)

- [Infographic](#) on intersectionality, positionality, and privilege
- Canadian Council for Refugees, [Anti-oppression Resources](#).
- [Wheel of Power/Privilege by Sylvia Duckworth](#), Instagram, August 19, 2020
- [Jacobson D. Mustafa N. Social Identity Map: A Reflexivity Tool for Practicing Explicit Positionality in Critical Qualitative Research. International Journal of Qualitative Methods. January 2019.](#)