Dance, Place
Library, Skills:
A collaboration

Paul Besaw & Selene Colburn
8.2.2011

Paul.Besaw@uvm.edu
Selene.Colburn@uvm.edu
Dance at the University of Vermont

• Program founded in 2006, in the Department of Music.

• Minor recently approved.

• Faculty: 1 tenure-track professor, 1 full-time lecturer, 2 part-time lecturers, associated faculty and staff
Embedded Librarianship

“If a regular part of your work involves participating in a group, community, or organizational unit primarily made up of non-librarians, providing information and knowledge as part of that group, then you are participating in a growing trend of embedding librarians and their services in settings outside of the library.”

Site-specific Dance

- Work made for a specific place or environment, often deeply influenced by that place.
- Usually takes place outside of traditional performance spaces.
- Increasingly important to UVM’s dance curriculum.
Site Dance and Performance

- Three-credit course, with nine students.
- Co-taught by Paul Besaw & Selene Colburn
- Included a mix of dance-making and research assignments.
Covert Information Literacy
Delivered at the point of need

• Met regularly in the Bailey/Howe library.

• Visited Special Collections with a guest choreography.

• Had place-based library instruction session in preparation for final projects.
Centennial Woods

A COLLABORATIVE MINI-ASSIGNMENT

- Centennial Woods is a 65 acre natural area managed by UVM and bordering its main campus.

- The Site Dance & Performance class spent four classes there, over two weeks, culminating in a performance showing.

- Three groups worked on three research/performance areas: history & issues; water systems & conservation; plant & animal life.
Final Projects

- Students selected a campus location and developed performance work for that area.
- They created annotated bibliographies documenting the sources they used to research their sites and additional topics that influenced their work.
Sample Final Projects
Walking and Biking the Path

- Investigated a campus pathway that serves as a focal point for Admitted Student Tours.

- A cast of young men performed movements derived from an investigation of biking and walking cultures.

Sample Sources Consulted:

Historic campus maps, interviews with an anthropology professor and a campus tour leader, anthropological and cultural studies of walking and biking.
Sample Final Projects
Searching for Fairies

- Dancers inhabited a wooded area and slowly revealed themselves to the audience.

- The choreographer’s understanding of fairy lore deepened with research.

- Her research findings directly influenced her choreographic structure.
What Students Thought

• They had mixed feelings about the balance of research and dance making.

• The research informed their choreography in beneficial ways.

• Many of them wanted more time for their final projects, so they could investigate their sites more thoroughly in research and composition processes.