

*Make an update of 300 words or more:* Describe an important site of multimodal communication in your life, or your students' lives. How might a multimodal analysis of meaning prove useful? How does this compare with traditional notions of literacy?

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My field is architecture and architecture history, though my work is in higher education rather than the design industry. The modes through which architects, builders, scholars and critics communicate are thoroughly multi-modal. This primarily happens through hybrid 'drawings'. These are visual line drawings, but they also contain many text annotations, abstract graphics and text symbols. Each document, in turn, is carefully indexed and cross-referenced, so that the arrangement of each artifact (drawing, spreadsheet, email) within the ecosystem of communication adds meaning that's essential to its purpose.

My students are training to become designers themselves. I've recently inherited two history courses for undergraduates, and I believe they offer important opportunities for students to practice the mode switching that will be required of them in the professional sphere. While they listen to my spoken lectures, they see photos and drawings on a screen, and some very limited text.

There is ample opportunity - and necessity - to switch modes as students engage with the course content. I'd like to offer more guidance on exactly how students should approach the challenge: which kinds of information are best recorded as a sketch, a diagram, a written note, etc. More than understanding ancient architecture, developing confidence in their ability to communicate, and to do so fluidly between modes, is the main value of the course. In architecture education, new technologies are actually not the key to improved mode switching - in fact these tools are so sophisticated that they can have the perverse effect of delaying the student's acquisition of multi-modal literacy. My goal is to convince students that their own minds have the computing capacity to make meaning of the built environment.