Why the fuss about content curation?

By Tania Sheko

So apparently content curation is the new black.

Was Jonathan Fields (2011) the first to coin this phrase when he asked the question in the title of his article, *Is Content Curation the New Black?*

I don't know. Judy O'Connell (2012) asked the same question in her article, *Content Curation in Libraries: Is it the New Black?* for SLANZA.

Certainly curation is the new buzzword. It is no longer the domain of museum curators, and not even the sole domain of librarians who have been 'curating' information and resources expertly since the beginning of libraries. Thanks to the abundant availability of information in various formats online, now it seems everyone is a curator. People are happily and passionately scooping, pinning, posting, and instagramming as a hobby, for events such as weddings, for research, and educational or business purposes.

It's no wonder that with such a wealth of free online material, everyone is busy trying to grab it, save it somewhere, organise it, classify and re-classify it, share it, and find creative uses for it.

If *'getting information off the Internet is like having a drink from a fire hydrant,'* as **Mitchell Kapor once said**, then using curation tools, such as **Pinterest**, **Diigo** and **Scoop.it**, to mention only a few, is one way of not drowning in the flood of information and data. **Clay Shirky** (2008) claimed the problem wasn't information overload, but filter failure. If **a content curator is someone who continually finds, groups, organizes and shares the best and most relevant content on a specific issue online** (Bhargava 2009), then the skill of filtering the flood of online information in this way is an essential skill for all in the 21st century.

What limit is there to the collaborative possibilities . . .

How exciting is this time when we are spoiled for choice while searching for information, news, opinions and multimedia? How satisfying to have a range of technology tools at hand to locate, capture, organise and share these things? How empowering to be in control of this whole process, and to be able to personalise the way we manage these resources. What limit is there to the collaborative possibilities in these newly created spaces made possible by new media technologies?

Why we share

Curation has been the core business of librarians in public and school libraries for a long time, but now we are operating on a whole new level. Of course libraries are in themselves curated collections based on selection criteria for clients. In school libraries, the teacher-librarian's role in supporting the whole curriculum gives us an overarching focus - we are always on the lookout for a broad range of resources to support teaching and learning. It is logical we would want to embrace new ways of storing, categorising and sharing on the internet. We are moving away from electronic pathfinders to more flexible, dynamic and collaborative platforms for curating and sharing resources, for example, **Pinterest**, **Scoop.it**, **Diigo**, Learnist, to name a few.

It is also logical we should embrace online communities so that we are not alone in our activities, so that we share with others and have them share with us. I would go so far as to say it doesn't make sense not to do so. Social networks have provided us with a plethora of online platforms to connect with educators and experts from all fields. These communities reside in spaces like **Google+**, **Pinterest.com**, **Scoop.it**, **Facebook groups** - to name a few.

. . . we rely on collaboration within our own teams, and across the national and global teacher-librarian networks. Sharing is second nature to us.

Why is it that teacher-librarians are often ready to participate in online networks more readily than classroom teachers? The reasons are complex but it is clear that teacher-librarians have a broad focus and multi-faceted role in the school, and because we are not responsible for the delivery of subject content, nor are we tied to specific classes, our role centres on supporting learning and literacies - information literacies, media literacies, digital literacies and network literacies; our hunting and gathering sends us further afield than classroom teachers. Furthermore, we are, whether we like it or not, separate from the teaching staff in that we have a different role. There are so few of us in the position of supporting the whole school community, and so we rely on collaboration within our own teams, and across the national and global teacher-librarian networks. Sharing is second nature to us.

Not everyone wants to share

Despite the explosion of technology tools which enable sharing, we are still living in a culture which frowns upon sharing. This is possibly a generational attitude but that's just my observation. Conversations about sharing on Facebook and Twitter are often accompanied by a

judgmental tone. Young people - but not only young people - are perceived to be sharing in inappropriate ways, and what is being shared is assumed to be trivial, self-centred, and generally undesirable. How many times have I heard comments which put the commenters in a superior position? Comments such as "I don't have the time to waste", "I don't care what others have for breakfast", and similar remarks, might be part of the reason why people are reluctant to 'share' for fear of being judged in the same way.

George Couros (2013) **wrote an article about teachers not wanting to share** or claiming they have nothing to share. A few reasons could be that they really don't have anything to share (doubt it), they underestimate their own value (watch **this Derek Sivers video** to help get them over that notion), but more importantly, they are in a culture that frowns (either directly or indirectly) on sharing. The view is that the people that 'share' are all about themselves (which, if you think about it, goes against the whole notion of sharing), or that anything of value would only come from an outside context.

Are we in a culture that frowns upon sharing? On the one hand we may think that we have nothing worth sharing, or we have something valuable that we want to keep to ourselves. I've met people who think that if they put a lot of work into something, they can't possibly share it. The mentality behind this attitude is that sharing takes something away from you. In fact, the opposite is true; the more people using your resources, the better you feel. How satisfying to know that all your hard work is being appreciated by so many. Furthermore, when you share through social media, you connect with others. It is gratifying to receive a blog comment or tweet from people who are grateful that you shared your resources, and who intend to share with their staff, or add to their website. If you devote a lot of time and effort into creating resources, wouldn't you feel it was worth it knowing that your work is appreciated by others?

Developing a participatory culture

The act of sharing develops valuable relationships. When you share with others they usually share with you, or their online profile leads you to their online resources - their blog, wiki, presentations, etc. The more people you connect with, the greater the opportunity you have to look at what they are doing and sharing - it's a win-win situation. This goes much further than resource exchange - a relationship is formed which leads to conversation, and now your most valuable resource is the person.

'Curation comes up when search stops working', says author and NYU Professor **Clay Shirky** (2010). But it's more than a human-powered filter. 'Curation comes up when people realize that it isn't just about information seeking, it's also about synchronizing a community' (2010).

Examples of curating and sharing

There are so many examples of the ways technology tools are being used to curate and share in an educational context, and it seems that new tools are being created weekly. In this article I will focus on the social bookmarking tool, Pinterest. **I've been a heavy Pinterest user** for less than a year, and yet at the time of writing I have already amassed 178 boards (collections), I've pinned 16,788 images; I follow 913 people, and am followed by 947 people. You might say I'm addicted.

Pinterest: an overview

If you're unfamiliar with **Pinterest**, it's worth learning how Pinterest works and thinking about how it can work as a curation tool. To begin with users create collections called boards.
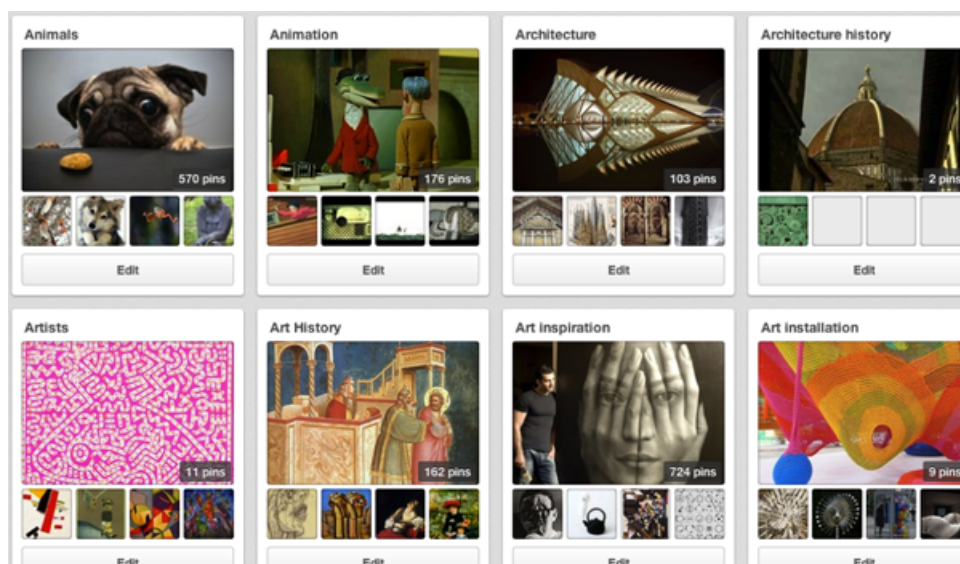
You can 'pin' an image by uploading from your pictures or adding from a website (image url). You name the board and select one of the images as your cover. Unlike Scoop.it, there is no limit to the number of boards, and you are permitted three private (secret) boards. You can easily drag the boards around to change their order, for example, if you want to order them alphabetically.
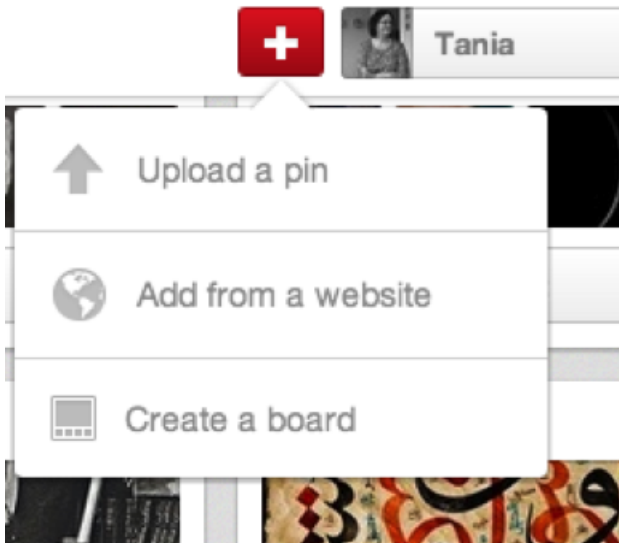
Pinterest is an excellent example of the emerging participatory culture made possible by social media platforms. You can collaboratively curate a board with a friend or colleague, or search for group boards. In the screenshot below you can see the icon representing collaboration in the top right hand corner.
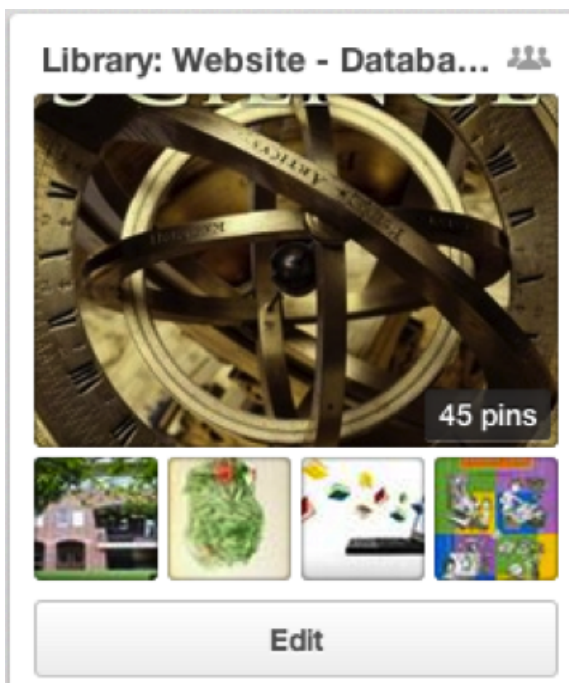
The social aspect of Pinterest is similar to **Facebook**, **Twitter** and other participatory platforms, in that you follow people and boards, and others can do the same with you and yours. You can find friends on Pinterest from your Facebook and Twitter network, or you can search for people on Pinterest.

If you like a pinner's image or board, chances are you will also like the rest of the boards. It's possible to follow selected boards if you don't want to follow all of them - people have varied interests! Once you follow a Pinner or boards, any updates from these people/boards will appear in your home feed. If you follow a large number of people or boards, the way to manage the gushing stream of shared images is the same as what you would do with any social media, such as Twitter - you let it go without feeling the pressure to capture everything; the stream does not stop, and there is never a short supply of wonderful resources.

Pinterest is not exclusively about collecting images. You can use Pinterest to curate websites as long as you attach the website's url to an image. If the Pinterest image you would like to pin is linked to a website, you can either click on the image twice or click once and then on the website button at the top of the image.

If you **add the 'Pin it' button** to your browser, you'll be able to 'pin' directly from the website you are visiting. The button takes you to a collection of images found on the website, from which you select your chosen one. If you are pinning an article without images, you might have to attach an image which is not located on the website. In this case you find an appropriately related image to represent the resource and add the image url, then edit the image by replacing the image url with the website url. (This sounds much more complicated than it is). The advantage of this is that your curated resources are presented as a series of visual snapshots, making it easy for the user to scan and locate resources at a glance. Teachers have commented favourably about Pinterest boards as collections of thematic resources, since it's easier to browse images to get an idea of the resource than read a list of urls. The image below is an example of a collection of web resources, text and video, pinned onto an image.

Hearts of Darkness

Humanity's capacity for evil

Edit Board   39 Pins
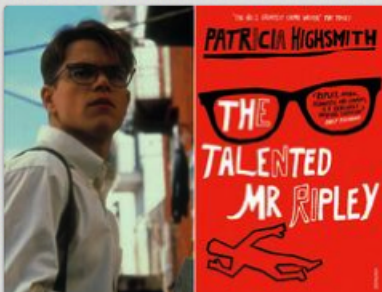
Patricia Highsmith's Ripley novels are classics of crime literature. The author's view of evil - as expressed through the amoral title character - fascinates writer and philosopher John Gray

Pinned by
Tania Sheko

from

Take a cursory glance at the news headlines for any random day, and it's not hard to develop a pessimistic attitude towards your fellow man. The endless reports of thieves, bombers, murderers, bigots, racists, and bullies is enough to make you lose all hope humans are capable of one day living in complete peace and harmony. Are we genetically

St Augustine develops his interpretation of moral evil in response to a plethora of
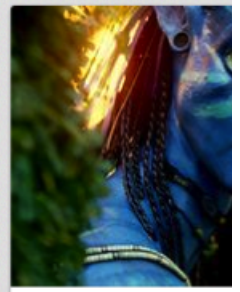
After AVATAR's initial some moviegoers res negatively to certain film, whether it be th characters or the repr certain groups. Overa has received rave rev become the top-gros time. Whether you ag film's story or not, it's interesting to watch t

From your own profile on Pinterest you can access your boards, your pins and your 'likes'.
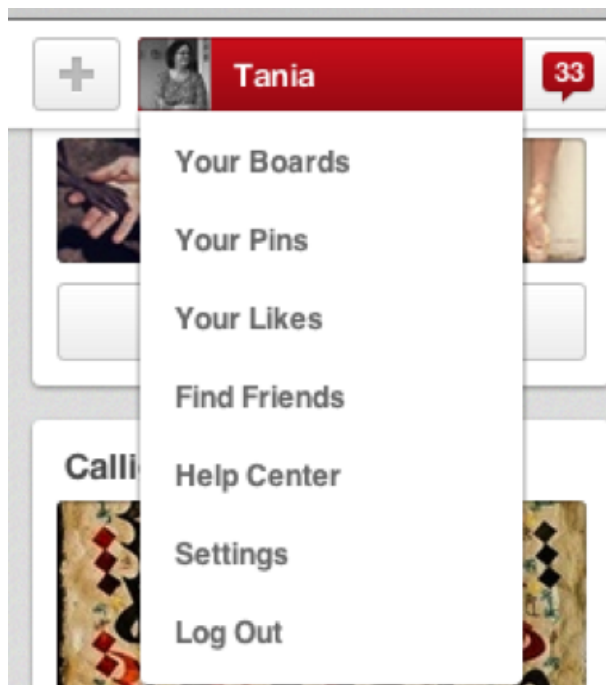
Being able to see your pins is useful for a chronological search with the most recent at the top, and enables you to find recently pinned images, as well as edit them (board title or description) or send the image to pinners in your Pinterest network, with or without a message.
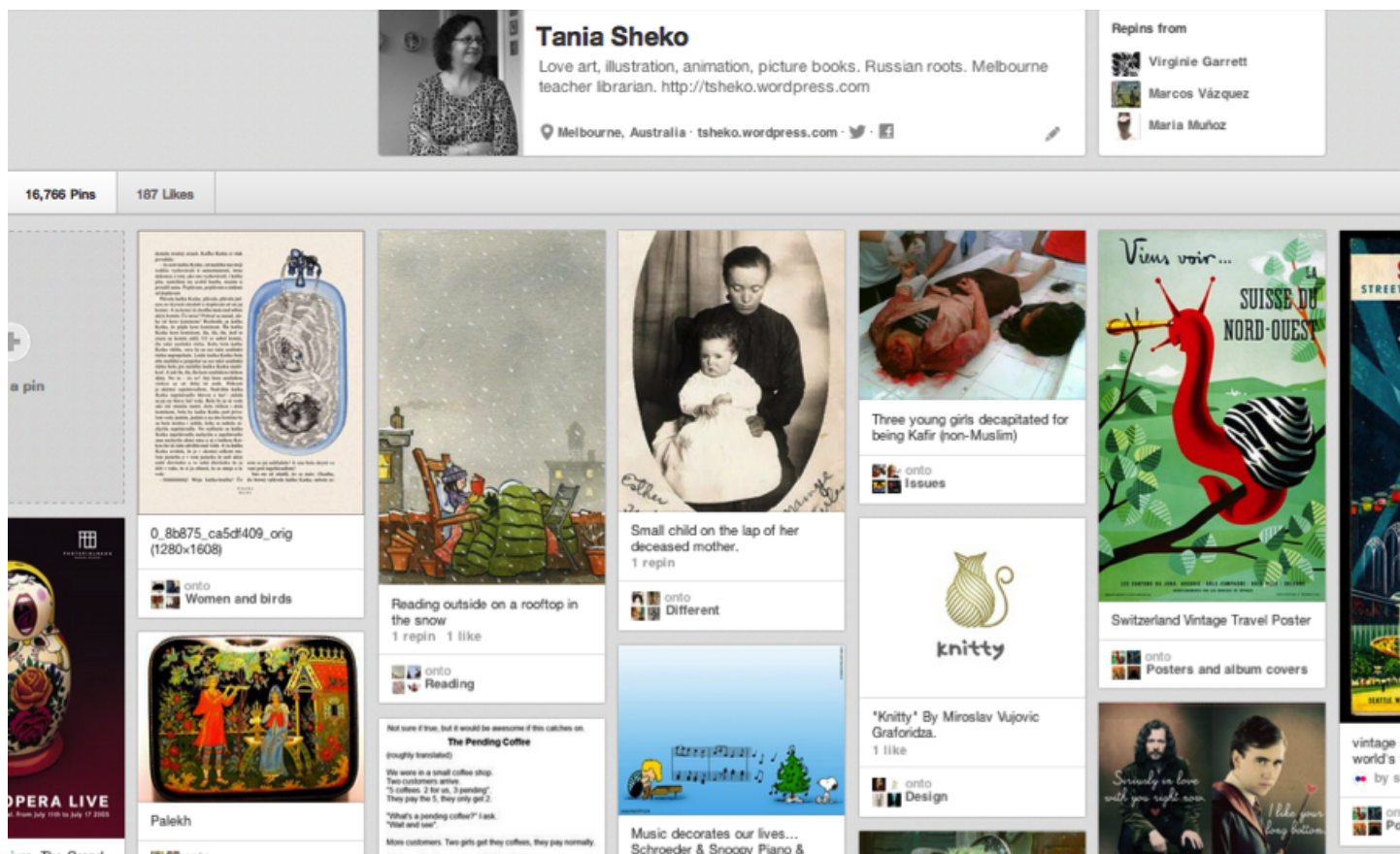
The number of experts in the field curating high quality resources on Pinterest is impressive. When I was using Pinterest to curate resources for the VCE subject Visual Communication Design, I discovered professionals - designers, curators, educators - who had painstakingly collected and classified the best examples of images for this subject area. I was overjoyed because these pinners had shared their expertise and their time taken to expertly classify their images. They often link to their blog or website - another rich resource to mine.

Polina Pakhomova
graphic designer, co-founder London based studio-Design Devision
www.designdevision.com

London · www.designdevision.com ·

Japanese Graphic Design

Unfollow Board

Unknown designer, 1 9 7 3 ,
Mach's noch einmal, Sam (Play
it again, Sam). Japanese version
of Woody Allen movie.
4 repins

Japanese Poster: Concert
Projection de Films. Ikko Tanaka.
1997
2 repins

Pinned from
domoa.tumblr.com

Hyex Hibi
5 repins   3 likes
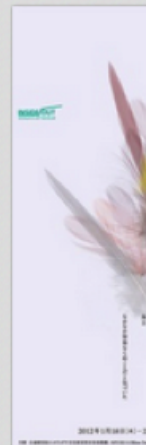
Pinned from
shirokuuma.tumblr.com
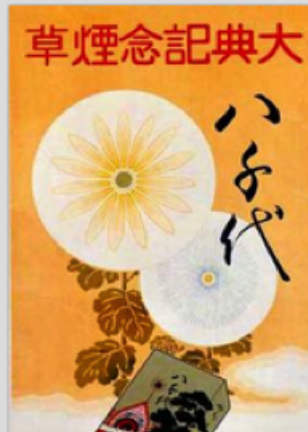
Battle Royale
4 repins   1 like

Pinned from
thefoxisblack.com

Tori-bi
4 repins   3 likes

Pinned from
d.hatena.ne.jp

Even more exciting was the discovery that browsing these experts' followers and those they themselves followed opened up a goldmine of further visual resources. This is the same for other social media platforms such as Diigo, Delicious and Twitter. These are the steps that people often miss when they use these social bookmarking tools for bookmarking only without digging deeper to follow connections within the network. Looking at what Pinners 'like' is another way of discovering people to follow; if you like the same pin, chances are you will be interested in checking out what else they've curated. Pinterest is an excellent example of a technology tool which offers not only an endless supply of resources, but a community of people who are experts or at least passionate about their area of focus. Knowing how to locate the experts who best suit your needs is a skill which should be taught, in my opinion. These would be valuable skills for students and teachers.

Looking at what Pinners 'like' is another way of discovering people to follow . . .

The **iPad app for Pinterest** is excellent, and even more intuitive for pinning images already in Pinterest, since you can access the category you wish to pin to by selecting the first letter of the title in an alphabetical list instead of scrolling which is time consuming when you have a long list.

Of course the touch option for iPad also makes pinning much faster than on a computer. Unfortunately pinning from a website is not possible on the iPad.

Using Pinterest to support Art

Last semester, some of our year 9 students worked on a **project in Art** which combined the best of hands-on activity, iPad technology and the social bookmarking tool, Pinterest. Their teacher designed a project in which they worked through a process starting with research of patterns from different cultural backgrounds and culminating in the students designing their own patterns using the iPad app, **iOrnament**, and creating an oversized paper plane decorated with their pattern designs.

The research process encouraged students to dip into a rich and diverse cultural store of patterns before deciding on designs of their own. I searched Pinterest for patterns and found an overwhelming number of relevant, high quality visual examples. My job was to find a way to create a webpage displaying enough images to create an overview of patterns from a range of cultural backgrounds without overwhelming the students, whilst providing the opportunity for them to further research areas of interest. Creating my cultural pattern collections within Pinterest boards and linking these, and similar boards curated by other Pinterest users, within **Libguides**, was a solution which served my purpose very well.

When you begin to use Pinterest, you may be surprised by the quality of your results. Individuals and organisations are even sharing images from high quality print resources, for example, I searched *The Grammar of Ornament* by Owen Jones on Pinterest and was overjoyed with **the results**.

My Pinterest boards for the year 9 Art project are curated **collections of general patterns**, and also **African**, **Australian Indigenous**, **Chinese**, **Indian**, **Islamic**, **Japanese**, **Maori**, **Mexican**, **Moroccan**, **Russian** and **Turkish** collections. Within Libguides I added to each collection one or more links to my Pinterest boards and those of other Pinners. One of the advantages of using Pinterest, as with all cloud-based tools, is that you can continue to add images to the collection without changing the website link, so students will be able to view a continuously edited collection with just one url.

Students should be encouraged to do some searching within Pinterest. The search function filters results for pins, boards and pinners. This leads to the consideration of Pinterest as a search engine, and to the question: should we be teaching our students to use Pinterest and similar social platforms as a serious search tool? I think I will leave this question for a subsequent article.

Pinterest is a rich, fast growing repository of quality resources . . .

For a teacher-librarian, it's good to know that Pinterest collections can be created very quickly. Pinterest is a rich, fast growing repository of quality resources thanks to the generosity and expertise of the community. As a result of this, I've sometimes created complete collections during the course of a lesson. For example, after a recent conversation with the art teacher about the current project, I attended a class where the students were practising drawing techniques by drawing on their ipads over a photograph of parts of their face: an ear, eye, mouth or nose. While the teacher was explaining drawing techniques to the students, I put together a Pinterest board of examples including images and video tutorials. The teacher was very pleased with the resources, and I was happy that I could create something valuable on the spot at the time of need.

In conclusion, I would like to share a range of Pinterest collections which I hope you will find useful.

Some of my Diigo lists for Pinterest

architecture

https://www.diigo.com/user/tsheko/Pinterest%20architecture

design

https://www.diigo.com/user/tsheko/Pinterest%20design

colour

https://www.diigo.com/user/tsheko/colour%20pinterest

collage

https://www.diigo.com/user/tsheko/pinterest%20collage

Art teachers on Pinterest

Donald Peters

Patricia Schappler (drawing in different media, printmaking and so many more)

Youtube on the Arts (Pinterest board)

Marc Sublet - graphic designer

The brief biography/profile is helpful and often includes a link to a blog or website.

Examples of the different ways teacher-librarians can use Pinterest:

Collections (boards) for:

Library

book trailers

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/book-trailers/

books and book covers

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/book-covers/

General library

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/books-and-libraries/

Library website design (collaborative board)

http://pinterest.com/isis27/library-website-redesign-layout-design-ideas/

YA book reviews

http://pinterest.com/isis27/library-reviews-ya-book-reviews/

Reading posters

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/reading/

Displays (eg History)

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/history/

Collaborative projects

http://pinterest.com/isis27/library-website-databases-resources-layout/

General education

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/education/

Supporting and creating curriculum

Text based resources eg Death of a Salesman

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/death-of-a-salesman/

Thematic studies: Banned books

http://pinterest.com/denisebean/banned-books/

general thematic, eg bigger picture

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/bigger-picture/

Issues

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/issues/

Lost

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/lost/

The above thematic subjects are very broad; an English teacher could do any number of things with the images, eg writing prompts

Art

drawing tutorials eg drawing parts of the body

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/drawing-parts-of-the-body/

Pattern: Islamic

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/pattern-islamic/

Writing;Story

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/story/

Writing in general

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/writing/

Social media

Educational Facebook

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/educational-facebook/

Social media

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/social-media/

Digital citizenship

Digital literacies

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/digital-literacies/

School events

Laureate launch (student magazine)

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/the-laureate-launch/

School programs

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/yr-9-scavengerhunt/

Videos

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/videos/

Picture collection for a blog

http://pinterest.com/taniatorikova/videos/

Experts on Pinterest

Toshio Miyake (graphic designer)

http://pinterest.com/makapin/

Atsushi Abe (film director/producer)

http://pinterest.com/atsushiabe/

Chris Dangtran (Designer)

http://pinterest.com/cdsimplicity/

David Gran (Art and technology educator)

http://pinterest.com/dsgran/

e.delacruz (nationally recognized art & museum educator | researcher | editor Visual Arts Research journal | community arts advocate)

http://pinterest.com/edelacruz/

Richard Fahey (art educator)

http://pinterest.com/richardfahey/

Celebrities

Scott McLeod

http://pinterest.com/scottmcleod/

Ben Silbermann (co-founder of Pinterest, over 830,000 followers!)

http://pinterest.com/ben/

Search for an illustrator

Edmund Dulac

http://pinterest.com/search/pins/?q=dulac

Organisations on Pinterest

NYPublic library

http://pinterest.com/ArtPictureNYPL/

European Library

http://pinterest.com/europeanlibrary/

Readings

http://pinterest.com/readingsbooks/

Free Literature (free e-books)

http://pinterest.com/marcdh/

Museum of London

http://pinterest.com/museumoflondon/

Thames and Hudson

http://pinterest.com/thamesandhudson/

Network for cultural heritage and art

http://pinterest.com/erfgoedenkunst/

Smithsonian magazine

http://pinterest.com/smithsonianmag/

Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

http://pinterest.com/phmuseum/

BBC Travel

http://pinterest.com/bbctravel/

TechCrunch (technology news)

http://pinterest.com/techcrunch/

ArchDaily (architecture)

http://pinterest.com/archdaily/

Harvard Press

http://pinterest.com/harvardpress/

Life magazine

http://pinterest.com/lifemagazine/

Tate Gallery

http://pinterest.com/tategallery/

ISTE (The International Society for Technology in Education)

http://pinterest.com/istepinterest/

Mashable

http://pinterest.com/mashable/

Australian Library and Information Association

http://pinterest.com/alianational/
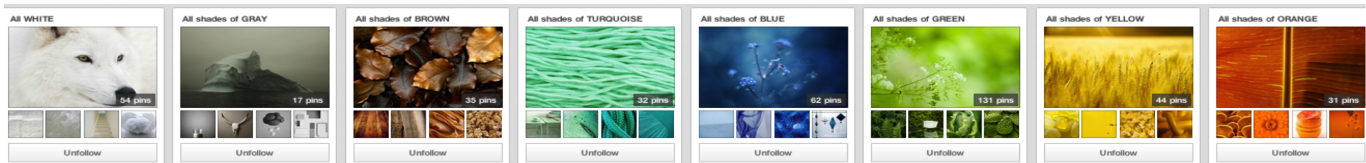
TED news

The History Lab (US)

Teaching Palette (art teachers sharing ideas)

Colour collections

Very specific collections
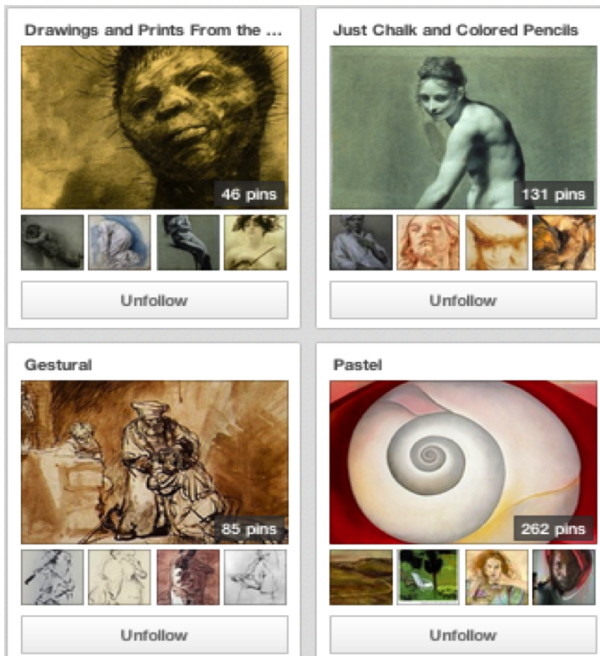
Texture/colour

Amazing collection of artist boards

Art collections

My slide presentation about Pinterest at a TeachMeet (as Google Presentation)

As a Slideshare

References

Bhargava, R. (2009) 'Manifesto for the Content Curator: The Next Big Social Media Job of the Future?' in *Influential Marketing Blog,* Web Log Post, 30 September, Accessed 3 August 2013 at:

http://www.rohitbhargava.com/2009/09/manifesto-for-the-content-curator-the-next-big-social-media-job-of-the-future-.html.

Couros, G (2013) 'The Prophets in Your Land' in *The Principal of Change*, Web Log Post, 28 June 2013, Accessed 3 August 2013 at:
<http://georgecouros.ca/blog/archives/3945>.

Fields, J. (2011) 'Is Content Curation the New Black?' in *Jonathan Fields,* web log post, 1 May, Accessed 3 August 2013 at:
<http://www.jonathanfields.com/blog/curation-is-the-new-content-black/>.

Mihailidis, P. (2013) 'Exploring Curation as a Core Competency in Digital Media Literacy Education' in *Journal of Interactive Media in Education*, Accessed 3 August 2013 at: http://jime.open.ac.uk/jime/article/viewFile/2013-02/pdf

O'Connell, J. (2012) 'Content Curation in Libraries: Is it the New Black?'in SLANZA, 2, p. 4, Accessed 3 August 2013 at:
<http://www.slanza.org.nz/uploads/9/7/5/5/9755821/may2012.pdf>

Web 2.0 Expo NY: Clay Shirky (shirky.com) It's Not Information Overload. It's Filter Failure (2008) Video Recording, Accessed 3 August 2013 at:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LabqeJEOQyl.

Tania Sheko *is a teacher-librarian and Director of Library at Melbourne High School. She arrived at this place having previously taught English, German, French, Russian and English as a Second Language. She spends her days immersed in online communities and serendipitously unearthing riches shared by people all over the globe. Her recent obsession is Pinterest which is a bottomless pit for all things visual in collections often curated by experts in the field. Tania rejoices in the teacher-librarian's holistic approach to education, and relishes the satisfaction of supporting teachers and students to enhance teaching and learning, and take it out of the confines of the classroom through social networks. She is on a mission to integrate essential aspects of digital citizenship into meaningful contexts to prepare young people for the literacies of their futures. In 2010 Tania received the SLAV innovators grant, she is a Google certified teacher and she was nominated for the Best Teachers blog in the 2011 edublog awards.*

Tania Blogs at:

Brave New World

http://tsheko.wordpress.com

Art does matter

http://artdoesmatter.tumblr.com/

on Twitter: @taniatorikova