

**Final Report for Global Brandeis Fund
on
The Gesture Project**

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The Gesture Project sought to create an online visual database of hand and facial gestures from around the world. With help from the Global Brandeis Fund we have created a web site (<http://www.gestureproject.com/>), which organizes gestures by geographic region and allows users to search gestures by meaning or by country.

The initial step the project was to create a web site which could present gestures from all around the world in a visual and searchable format. After some research, I was able to create a web site by using Exhibit (<http://simile.mit.edu/exhibit/>), an online tool developed by MIT, which can present data geographically. Not only is the information displayed geographically, the tool also allows searching through the information. The user is able to search by description, meaning or geographically to find a gesture or group of gestures.

Once the technical frame work was created, the other challenge was gathering gestures. This step was surprisingly more challenging than I had expected. We had two gesture gathering events, where students were asked to show gestures from either their native cultures or cultures they are familiar with. Though most students thought the project had merit, many did not always want to share gestures they use on a daily basis in front of a video camera. Interestingly, participants were more likely to offer to show gestures they have learned from other cultures rather than their own. However, we were successful in gathering over a hundred gestures from over 20 countries.

The most surprising challenge in the project was how difficult it is to take good quality video, to edit and to format for use on the web. I have learned much about this subject and hope to apply these lessons in obtaining better quality video for the project.

I have recently been contacted by the creator of another gesture project. Our projects are surprisingly similar; there are similar goals though slightly different approaches. I hope to continue the gesture project by pursuing this collaboration. We hope to take the best parts of each of our projects and combine our efforts in creating a more robust online gesture dictionary.

I am very grateful to the Brandeis Global Fund and its generosity. It has helped bring the gesture project to fruition.