The Library is closed due to the storm,” said the notice on the Library’s home page on October 29-30, while the city was reeling from the effects of Hurricane Sandy. But by Halloween we realized how wrong we were, and changed the message to “The Lloyd Sealy Library is closed due to the storm, but electronic resources remain available.” Of course, our students and faculty already knew that. Although the beautiful wood, carpet, and paper Lloyd Sealy Library was very much shuttered tight, the online library was wide open. 4,312 people visited the Library website from Monday to Wednesday of that week, viewing 9,240 web pages. During that same time there were 2,105 logins by students, faculty and staff members for remote use of our licensed electronic resources. The Sealy Library is so busy during the course of a normal workday—with students studying in groups, reading, asking questions, or just chilling—that it is easy for us to forget how much of “library” work goes unseen.

Book circulation at John Jay has been dropping slowly over the years, but use of library materials has grown. (See graphs.) In calendar year 2011, the John Jay community downloaded over 1 million journal articles and almost half a million book “parts,” performed almost 2.4 million database searches, and streamed videos over 2,000 times. Sixty to seventy percent or more of this use came from off-campus: from people’s homes, offices, vacation spots, or in-transit locations via mobile devices. The subway may stop; the College may be closed; the Lloyd Sealy Library’s glass doors may be locked, but the Library is open.

—Bonnie R. Nelson
Interim Chief Librarian
New Library Exhibits

Catching more eyes

Kathleen Collins

As you head up the stairs to the second floor, you may have already noticed a new addition to the library’s first floor lounge. We participated in this Fall’s Banned Books Week (September 30 through October 6) in order to highlight the problem of censorship and celebrate the freedom to read. Banned Books Week, held annually for the past thirty years, inspired some of our library faculty to develop an exhibit featuring a number of formerly banned books. The exhibit presented some very well-known titles by critically acclaimed authors. Many visitors were surprised that these classics had been banned at one point or place in time. For instance, JD Salinger’s The Catcher in the Rye was often criticized and in some cases banned for its “obscene” content. Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man was considered violent and sexually explicit. Other featured books included Gone with the Wind by Margaret Mitchell, To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee, Beloved and Song of Solomon by Toni Morrison, and Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck. We noticed a significant number of library patrons stopping to look at the exhibit and taking a copy of the accompanying pamphlet. All of the books featured in the exhibit are available to borrow from the library.

The Banned Books Week exhibit in turn inspired us to highlight another week, this one a much younger endeavor but growing in visibility and importance internationally. Open Access Week (celebrated this year October 22 through 28) is a global event in its sixth year. Open Access advocates free, immediate, online access to scholarly research. Placed in the library lobby, the exhibit featured an array of books that are under copyright, published under a Creative Commons license, in the public domain or available via open access. In addition, it included books about these topics (each of which falls into at least one of the above categories) that are under copyright, published under a Creative Commons license, in the public domain or available via open access. In addition, it included books about these topics (each of which falls into at least one of the above categories) that are available to borrow from the library. Just beside the exhibit case, there were several handouts to help further explain the exhibit’s content, including additional information on copyright, fair use, and open licensing.

To learn more about Open Access Week and Open Access in general, see openaccessweek.org.

Keep an eye for more exhibits to appear in these and other spaces throughout the library in the coming year.

Faculty Publications and News

Scholarly activities of library faculty


Kathleen Collins’s article, “A Kitchen of One’s Own: The Paradox of Dione Lucas,” was published in Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies, 27 (28 0). Two of her book reviews were published in the June issue of Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly (89/2), and she had an essay appear in the second issue of 2 Bridges Review, a literary journal published by the New York City College of Technology (2bridgesreview.blogspot.com). She also joined three CUNY library colleagues on a panel, “Get Published Now,” at the New York Library Association conference in Saratoga Springs in November.

Karen Okamoto’s article, “Licensed to Share,” will be published this year in the Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery, and Electronic Reserves, 22(4/5). An article on promotion and marketing in academic libraries she co-wrote with Mark Aaron Polger was published in Library Leadership & Management, 26(2), 1-20.


Robin Davis was featured on The Setup, a collection of interviews that detail how tech professionals use hardware, software and other tools in their work (robin.davis.usesthis.com).

Library faculty presented two workshops at the John Jay Faculty Development Day (“Building Community through Innovative Pedagogy”) on August 24th. Marta Bladek, Kathleen Collins and Karen Okamoto talked about designing research assignments in “Great Expectations: Research Assignments and Student Skills.” Janice Dunham, Maria Kiriakova, and Ellen Sexton highlighted the newest trends in electronic resources during their talk on “Library Etools for Teaching.”
In September, we welcomed Robin Davis as our Emerging Technologies & Distance Services Librarian. Robin earned her Bachelor’s degree from Brown University, concentrating in medieval and early modern English literature. She received her Master’s in Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she held a Data Curation in the Humanities Fellowship. Prior to joining John Jay, Robin interned at the Smithsonian Institution Archives where she developed a web preservation workflow; she also held a student design position at the Center for Digital Scholarship at Brown University. She is currently a managing co-editor and developer for the DH Curation Guide, a community resource for humanities data curation. Her research interests include digital preservation, the history and future of reading, text mining, and user experience design. She is a member of the Association for Computers and the Humanities (ACH) and Beta Phi Mu.

You can find and follow Robin on Twitter at @robincamille or at her blog, robincamille.com. Robin’s first John Jay task is to redesign (inside and out) the library’s website. (See p. 11 for a sneak peek.)

In addition to Robin Davis, the library has two new reference librarians, substitutes for Professors Larry Sullivan and Ellen Sexton, who are on sabbatical this academic year.

Mark Zubarev is a reference and instruction librarian with several years of experience in education and academic librarianship. Mark is a graduate of Brooklyn College (B.A. 2000, M.A. 2005) as well as the School of Library and Information Science at Pratt Institute (M.L.S. 2007). The Lloyd Sealy Library has been fortunate to have him as an adjunct reference and instruction librarian since 2007. Mark has multifarious talents. He wrote the Library Subject Guide on Graphic Novels & Manga, and as Library liaison to Fire Science, created a Guide to Fire Science and mounted the current library display and pamphlet on Fire Science. You can also meet Mark on his blog, The Fortress of Solitude, at markzubarev.com/blog.

Maureen Richards has worked in the legal profession for over thirty years. She earned her J.D. from Fordham University and Master’s in Library and Information Studies from Queens College. Prior to joining the library as a substitute, Maureen interned with us in the spring of 2012. While attending Queens College, she worked as a Volunteer Staff Attorney for the Pro Bono Partnership and counseled New York clients on corporate governance and organization issues, intellectual property matters and contracts, as well as non-profit and tax-exempt law. She also served, and continues to serve, as an arbitrator in the small claims court in the NYC Civil Court, Bronx County. Maureen formerly served as Sr. VP, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary at Footstar, Inc. and as VP at Melville Corporation, where she spent over twenty years counseling retail corporations on all aspects of operations including litigation, crisis management, employment and intellectual property. Prior to that she worked for NYC law firms and a federal judge in the Southern District of New York.

Maureen is particularly interested in the way the Internet is transforming culture. She developed the idea for the Open Access exhibit and provided information meetings/discussions on the topic in conjunction with the Center for the Advancement of Teaching in October.
April 2013 LACUNY Institute  
Libraries, Information, and the Right to the City  
Kathleen Collins

The Library Association of the City University of New York (LACUNY), founded in 1939, is a cooperative group of CUNY library faculty and staff whose goals include “the promotion of the professional interests of the members of the association.” On a regular basis since 1956, the organization has developed and offered the LACUNY Institute, a theme-based event featuring keynote speakers, panel discussions and networking opportunities open to members and non-members alike.

This academic year, the Institute is titled “Libraries, Information, and the Right to the City.” It will be held at John Jay College on April 5, 2013 and will explore how library and information professionals participate in social transformations by engaging with urban resources. The Institute will analyze how changes in technology have changed libraries, as well as the nature of cities. Subtopics might include: librarians and social movements, libraries and public services, the ethics of representation, services to traditionally marginalized groups, the ethics of user-generated content, as well as Open Access and the public’s right to information. The keynote speakers will be Christine Pawley, former director of the School of Library and Information Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Jessa Lingel, doctoral student at Rutgers and author of “Occupy Wall Street and the Myth of Technological Death of the Library.”

This year’s theme of urban communities and knowledge production will likely be of interest to some in the John Jay community. Please save the date for this daylong event. Check lacuny.org in coming months for details and registration.

Open Access

Maureen Richards

So far, the 21st century has been marked by demands for more transparency and openness. Some outgrowths include open source software, open education, open government and in the arena of scholarly communication, open access publishing.

Peter Suber, the Director of the Harvard Open Access Project and fellow of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, defines “Open Access” publications as literature that is “digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions.” The Open Access movement arose because of the confluence of three factors:

1) the inability of libraries to afford scholarly journal prices that were increasing four times faster than the rate of inflation;
2) the harm, particularly in the sciences, of not making the results of research immediately and freely available to everyone; and
3) widespread access to the Internet, a platform for easily and widely disseminating the results of research immediately. For more information on Open Access, please visit Suber’s detailed overview at earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm.

Open Access has become a worldwide movement. It has been embraced by several not-for-profit media companies including Wikipedia, the “free, collaboratively edited, and multilingual Internet encyclopedia” (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia); Creative Commons, which promotes the “sharing and use of creativity and knowledge through free legal tools” (creativecommons.org/about); and educational institutions in the United States and throughout the world.

Every October, Open Access Week is celebrated across the world. This year, the Lloyd Sealy Library participated in the celebrations by organizing an Open Access exhibit (see Kathleen Collins’s article, p. 2). CUNY is involved in Open Access as well. OpenAccess@CUNY, a group on CUNY Commons, tracks related initiatives across the university (openaccess.commons.gc.cuny.edu). The CUNY Faculty Senate adopted a resolution supporting Open Access and the creation of an Institutional Repository in November 2011. Several CUNY faculty members, including Professor James DiGiovanna of the Philosophy Department at John Jay, are experimenting with only using Open Access materials in the classroom.

For more information about Open Access, search the online catalog CUNY+ and the library databases using “Open Access” as your keyword.

Open Access publications: digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions.
You may have noticed variations of an author’s name listed on publications and within different databases. Sometimes an author’s first initial is listed instead of the full first name. Sometimes middle names are provided or abbreviated to a second initial. Author misidentification presents a problem in identifying and attributing works.

ORCID, a non-profit community-based organization, addresses this problem by assigning a unique number to each author. The ORCID identifier can be used on manuscripts and grant applications. It can also be used to identify an author's publications and other scholarly activities. ORCID identifiers can be linked to other proprietary identifiers from databases and services such as Scopus, LinkedIn or ResearcherID. For further details, and to create an ID, visit orcid.org.

Similar to ORCID, ResearcherID is an identification number created by Thomson Reuters which delivers the Web of Science database. Authors can create a free identifier and account at researcherID.com. ID numbers can be used to manage publication lists, track the number of times a publication has been cited, determine their h-index and identify potential collaborators.

In the Web of Science database, authors can search for their publications by ResearcherID. They can also link their ResearcherID to a publication that has not been associated with their identifier. This can be done via the article record in the Web of Science. The article record provides an “I wrote these publications” link for authors to make this attribution.

The Web of Science has an alerting feature that you can use to track who is citing your articles. To use this service, search for your article in Web of Science, then open the article record. Within the record, you will see a “Create Citation Alert” link on the right. Click on this link and register with Web of Science to create and configure your alert.

The English classical scholar and clergyman, Charles Burney (1757-1817), gathered a good deal of newspapers, pamphlets, broadsides and books during his lifetime. His collection was considered so important that the British House of Commons granted the purchase price to the British Museum Library, and in 1818, it became the cornerstone of the Library's 17th and 18th centuries' news collections. Developed over the next two centuries through piecemeal and large bequests, the Burney Newspapers, representing the most comprehensive collection of early English and English Colonial news media, were bound into 136 volumes of 17th century newspapers and about 1,145 volumes of 18th century newspapers. Because of the fragility of the collection, it was eventually pulled from the shelves and made available on microfilm. These were digitized and indexed by Gale and are now available to the John Jay (and CUNY) community in the Burney Newspaper Collection on our A-to-Z list of databases. You can now read first hand news accounts reporting events ranging in date from 1603 to the early 1800s, including the outbreak of plagues, the Great Fire in 17th century London, and popular opinions from articles on issues like crime and justice, the slave trade in the colonies, and the American Revolution.
John Jay Faculty Research at a Glance
A Report Generated by Web of Science

Marta Bladek

Web of Science, the large multidisciplinary journal citation database, not only allows scholars to conduct research on a topic of interest, but its many indexing features also offer insight into trends and patterns that show how scholarship circulates.

For example, Web of Science makes it possible to generate an institutional report that sums up the faculty’s scholarly output over a specified period of time. (The report is, of course, limited to items from journals indexed in the database. While comprehensive, it is not exhaustive, because it omits items not indexed in Web of Science.) At the beginning of November, I ran a query to see what kind of research John Jay faculty have been producing since the year 2000. After specifying John Jay as the originating organization and setting the date range as 2000-2012, I was able to discover quite a few interesting details about the work of our faculty. The database-generated charts below illustrate the specifics.

Web of Science lists 978 results that came from John Jay since 2000, including 700 articles, 177 book reviews, 45 editorials, and 39 conference proceeding papers. In each of the years 2007, 2008 and 2009 John Jay faculty published more than 100 items. In 2011 alone, our faculty’s research was cited over 900 times.

The largest number of items came out in the following Web of Science categories: Psychology (303), followed by Criminal Justice (164), Government Law (123), and Psychiatry (66). Other categories in which John Jay faculty frequently published included Chemistry (45), Literature (44), Legal Medicine (41), History (400), as well as Sociology (39). Among the journals that published John Jay’s research most often are Journal of Forensic Sciences (31 items), Law and Human Behavior (25), Library Journal (18), Criminal Justice and Behavior (17), and International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology (17).

“Child maltreatment 1: Burden and consequences of child maltreatment in high-income countries” is currently the most cited article authored by a John Jay faculty. Distinguished Professor of Psychology Cathy Spatz Widom is the article's second author (Ruth Gilbert is the first author). The article has been cited 187 times since its publication in Lancet in 2009 (Vol. 373, no. 9657).

The contents of the database are updated regularly as new items are published and indexed. Accordingly, by December the numbers of articles by our faculty will only have grown, as will have the number of citations referring to their work. The report generated by Web of Science is but another reminder of the active scholarly agenda pursued at the college.


Faculty Favorites  Wherein faculty share a favorite book with the rest of us

Comments solicited by Janice Dunham

Richard Ocejo, Sociology Department


I couldn't put this book down until I finished it. I love American and urban history, and as an urban sociologist, I've read a lot about the African American experience in US cities. There really is no other book that I know of that captures the full experience and the complexities of the Great Migration in such a sweeping as well as intimate way. I'm also a qualitative scholar, so I was blown away that Wilkerson conducted more than 1,200 interviews for this book. But she chose to focus in great depth on only 3 of them! Other interviewees (including her own parents, who migrated from the south to Washington, D.C.) pop up occasionally. Her ability to condense the lives of hundreds into a narrative is astounding. But she always brings it back to their lives and stories, from their earliest memories to today.

Even people familiar with the Great Migration will surely hear stories in this book that will surprise them. I often discuss it in my Research Methods classes as an example of interviewing and oral history. I'm sure faculty could find many helpful sections within its 600 pages for their own courses. It truly is a remarkable addition to nonfiction literature.

Jama Adams, Africana Studies and Chair, Council of Chairs


Eagleton invites you to think through the challenges of being reflective, ethical and also happy. This book takes the edge off age-appropriate anxiety and melancholia.
News from the Library’s Media Department

Nancy Egan

Recently we added another database of streaming videos to our already extensive collection of streaming video databases! Criminal Justice and Public Safety in Video, from the Alexander Street Press, offers a collection (currently 467 titles and growing) of documentaries, training videos, and interviews that offer real life strategies, techniques, and experiences of justice and public safety professionals as well as profiles and accounts from offenders and victims. Films are from distributor/providers like Filmmakers Inc., A&E Television, and TVF International and are available in subject areas like:

- Criminal Justice and Public Safety in Video
- Forensics
- Juvenile Justice
- Law enforcement
- Substance abuse/Re-entry
- Victimology
- Violent Crime
- First responders

Browse the collection to find videos like “The Arson Detectives,” a look inside Houston's elite arson detective unit; or “Murder Ink,” a documentary about some of the people who work as crime reporters for some of New York City's biggest newspapers; or “Behind Closed Doors,” an in-depth examination of domestic violence from both an abuser's and a victim's personal perspectives; and hundreds more.

Like all of our streaming video collections, the videos can be shown in class for a group viewing experience or they can be watched at home so faculty can assign films to their students to watch independently. You can insert the URL of a video into your Blackboard or webpage. There is also an easy to use tool that allows you to select short clips from any of the films and create unique URLs of the clips.

Each film's title is listed in the CUNY+ online catalog, and the database itself can be found on our A-to-Z list of databases. Also, you can go to the Library's video collection guide to learn more about this and all of our streaming videos and DVDs at guides.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/video. As always, if you’ve any comments or questions about the Library’s media resources, please contact Nancy Egan (x8269, negan@jjay.cuny.edu).

Back in 2001, the Lloyd Sealy Library was one of the first in CUNY to start collecting academic monographs in electronic format. We have by now acquired a very impressive collection of ebooks consisting of thousands of titles. For example, Ebrary, only one of our ebook collections, includes over 80,000 titles. A decade ago we had only one platform for ebooks; today we have around a dozen different ones, and their number is growing. We have ebooks that are unique to John Jay and a part of our permanent collection, as well as ebooks acquired by CUNY and available on subscription basis to all CUNY libraries.

Although ebooks have been on the market for many years, their accessibility modes are still evolving. In addition, publishers of ebooks offer different acquisition and distribution models for academic and public libraries, individual buyers and college bookstores. Ebooks available to academic libraries feature many restrictions in terms of downloading options, simultaneous accessibility by multiple users, mobile technology compatibility, etc. Ebooks are also very expensive (in most cases, they cost 150% of the hardcover edition), but multiple user access is not always provided, and when it is the price is astronomical. All these issues are taken into consideration when the library buys a title in the electronic format.

Ebooks purchased CUNY-wide have a multi-user simultaneous access; John Jay purchases have a single user access in the majority of cases, with some exclusion when the books are available to three or more online readers at the same time. You will get a message in case the book you want is “checked out” by another user and an option to be notified when the book becomes available again.

We acquire electronic books for various reasons: convenient around-the-clock access, popularity of the title, price of the ebook, compatibility with Blackboard, no remaining space on the library shelves for certain subjects, book theft and mutilation (a print book gets lost, is not returned, or has pages ripped off after only one circulation).

Most ebooks are cataloged in CUNY+, the online catalog. Some, however, are not because in our century of technologi-

Interpreting ebook records in CUNY+

1 Stepfamily therapy [electronic resource]

The term electronic resource indicates an ebook in the catalog.
Ebooks Acquisitions

cal wonders the library catalog maintenance still requires a lot of manual handling, and some records of the ebooks exist in different databases and get loaded up in the catalog with delay. Even marvelous cross-links between the databases do not work all the time. For all the above reasons, when looking for a specific title, it is a good habit to double-check the catalog, a specific database, or just send a query to libref@jjay.cuny.edu.

Our biggest ebook providers are Ebrary and EBSCO. Most of the records are in CUNY+, but it is a good idea to explore and search these databases separately.

We also have a huge collection of ebooks published by CRC Press. They cover forensic science, security management, fire and arson investigation, law enforcement, criminal justice and law. The records of many of these ebooks are not updated in CUNY+ fast enough, and it is recommended to check the most recent books published by CRC Press by going directly to CRC Netbase Collections.

Two well-established databases in humanities, Project Muse and JSTOR, have recently added ebooks to their content. We do not have any books abstracted in Project Muse in full-text electronic format, but a small number of the results you get might be Open Access or just free access items. In JSTOR, you can limit the search to the content that is available in full-text for John Jay patrons or expand your search capabilities and look at everything in abstract format. JSTOR will search the library catalog and provide information if we have a print or an electronic copy (in Ebrary, for example).

SpringerLink is one of the latest CUNY consortial acquisitions of ebooks in the areas of science, technology and mathematics. The access to these ebooks is simultaneous for multiple users. As with many other databases where the search of the ever-expanding content has gotten more sophisticated, users might get information on the publications that cannot be available in full-text online. Always pay attention to the symbols appearing next to the record. As a rule, green color specifies online availability. Other colors (yellow or red) might indicate that the content is protected and not available online under our subscription. Re-check the titles in the online catalog CUNY+ and see if they are available in our print collection or somewhere else in CUNY. Remember that faculty, staff and graduate students may arrange for Interlibrary Loan or recommend a purchase to the library.

Faculty teaching undergraduate courses should welcome a big collection of ebooks, Palgrave Connect from Palgrave Macmillan, a well-known international academic publisher. Although only 30% of the ebooks in this database will be available in full-text to John Jay college patrons, all of these can be downloaded in full-text without restrictions.

The library’s handy subject guide on ebooks (guides.lib.jjay.cuny.edu/ebooks) will provide detailed information on downloading options for ebooks to personal computers and mobile devices. Also, please check the Help Pages and FAQ sites of individual databases because the vendors constantly change and update their services and downloading capabilities. The ebook guide summarizes the majority of the ebooks collections and is a major gateway to our electronic monographs holdings. Nevertheless, you can explore individual databases mentioned here through the alphabetical list of databases on the library’s website (www.lib.jjay.cuny.edu).

Ebooks should make our life easier. Yet a user-friendly searching and locating mechanism for the growing collection of these materials is still missing; ebook downloading options remain rudimentary and clunky, and the high price and limited accessibility modes are also deterrents. The librarians at John Jay are aware of these problems. We work together with the CUNY Central Office of Library Services and other CUNY librarians to advocate for user rights with ebook vendors.

Please contact the library with further questions and suggestions regarding ebooks. Prof. Maria Kiriakova (mkiriakova@jjay.cuny.edu) is responsible for the selection and acquisition and Prof. Nancy Egan (negan@jjay.cuny.edu) for technical problems associated with ebooks.
Would you like to be able to direct students to resources that will help them prepare their assignments or engage in research? Or, perhaps, you’d like students to have easy access to a discipline-specific dictionary that can help them through their complex reading materials? There is an easy way to do it. You can make any of the library’s electronic resources available through Blackboard by creating a virtual “Reference Shelf” in your course page and linking to materials you think would be useful.

Let’s say you are going to be teaching a class on the history of religion. This is a new subject for many of your students so you would like them to be able to have a handy reference available if they come across terms in their readings that are new to them. A good place to find any materials you’re looking for is Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL)—a multidisciplinary collection of over 2,000 encyclopedias, dictionaries, glossaries and handbooks. In GVRL, you can choose religion from the list of subjects on the left-hand side of the page (left). There, you will see thumbnail prints of all the reference sources the collection has on religion (below).

So, let’s say you decide to put The Brill Dictionary of Religion on your “reference shelf.”

1. First, right click on the image of the book and then click on “Save image [or picture] as.” Choose the drive you would like to save your picture in (you can save the image right to your desktop) and name the file, in this case “Brill.”

2. Then, left click on the title of the book in the record and go to the opening page of the dictionary. At the top of the page, you will see a “Bookmark” tab. Click on that and then copy the bookmarked URL (hint: some databases call these permanent URLs, permalinks or permanent links).
Now, create a blank page in your Blackboard account. Let's call it “Religion Reference Shelf.” Make sure the edit mode is on and pull down the “Build Content” link. From this menu, choose URL. You will get a screen that looks like this:

Simply enter the title of the chosen resource and paste in the URL that you bookmarked. Then, click on the “Attach Image” icon. When the screen pops up, choose “Browse My Computer.” To get the image of the cover that you saved, click on the drive (in this case, Desktop), and the name of the file (in this case, Brill) and then click “Submit.” Enter any text you’d like to describe the source. When you turn your edit mode off, your page should looks like this:

Repeat these steps for each source you’d like on your reference shelf.

If you would like help creating your reference shelf in Blackboard, contact Nancy Egan (x8269 or negan@jjay.cuny.edu).

Be on the lookout for a New Year’s gift from the Library: a new website! At the end of the year, we will be launching the site with updated functionality and a new look.

To make sure we redesigned with the users first in our minds, we conducted a usability study. This process involves asking study participants to complete various tasks on a test interface. Ideally, usability study participants should represent a cross-section of a website’s users; ours therefore included SEEK students, a PhD candidate, and one faculty member. Based on their feedback, we prioritized ease of use for all members of the John Jay community.

Some geeky details: we have migrated our site from a mostly static interface to Drupal, a very powerful, open-source content management system (CMS). Because we are seeing increasing numbers of users accessing the library website through mobile devices, we have also prioritized responsiveness, a design philosophy that values an equal user experience across the gamut of web-enabled devices. (To the two users who access the library site via their PlayStation 3, according to our site analytics: we hope the new site looks good for you, too, no matter how you do your research.)

We look forward to launching our new homepage — keep an eye out!

The idea of MOOCs, Massive Open Online Courses, was developed out of MIT’s OpenCourseWare (OCW) of a decade ago. Today MIT still offers OCW for 2,100 courses freely online in “a spirit of intellectual philanthropy that aligns closely with the mission of the institution.” Yale, UMass, Stanford, Carnegie Mellon, CUNY’s Queensborough Community College and other universities continue to offer OCW.

Most prestigious among MOOCs is the non-profit edX, a partnership between MITx and Harvardx. Each school contributed thirty million dollars in start-up funds in 2012. Their primary goal is to research how students learn and how technology transforms teaching. BerkeleyX joined the edX partnership without financial commitment. Seven courses are offered in Fall 2012. Stanford, also among the top tier schools, is working on several levels: it will offer courses on the edX platform, on Coursera, on Stanford’s VentureLab platform, and on its new platform called Course2Go. Stanford is also talking to Google about Google’s Course Builder.

Stanford’s new Course2Go platform offers seven courses, among them Solar Cells and Computer Networking. MOOC students pay no tuition and watch lectures online. Stanford’s on-campus tuition-paying, credit-earning students view the online lectures but have additional class time for interactive exercises and class speakers. Students attending by MOOC pay nothing and get no academic credit, but for a small fee they can get a certificate of completion from the professor. So far, Colorado State U./Global and Antioch are the only U.S. schools to offer credit for a MOOC – after a proctored exam. University of Washington anticipates giving some credit. The American Council on Education and Coursera plan to pilot a project to evaluate MOOC credits. An edX executive says, “It’s a live laboratory for studying how people learn, how the mind works, and how to improve education, both residential and online.”

An MIT professor: “We’re all babes in the woods with these massive online courses.” A Kellogg professor: “This is a learning experience for me as much as for my students.”

Stanford professors were instrumental during 2011 in developing platforms for three for-profit MOOC ventures: Coursera, Udacity, and Udemy. (Though their business plans anticipate profit, they use venture capital money now.) Coursera began in January 2012; in September it doubled its university participation by signing 17 more schools to a non-exclusive contract for at least one course. Among the signers are Brown, Columbia, Wesleyan, Emory, Vanderbilt, Pitt, U. Ill. Urbana-Champaign, and U. Md. In addition, two CMS companies, Blackboard and Instructure, announced their for-profit MOOC platform on Nov. 1. John Jay College plans to offer at least one MOOC in Fall 2013, though the platform has not yet been announced.

MOOCs cite very large numbers of registered students, ranging from 4,000 to hundreds of thousands, but there are few numbers on course completion. Estimates are about 10%.

It’s acknowledged that for many students, the MOOC is just a tryout. Since MOOCs don’t charge tuition, ideas for monetizing these classes include charging minimally for registration, charging more than nominally for testing and certificates (with plagiarism controls), selling information about students to other marketers, matching students with employers, putting ads on MOOC platforms, having companies finance courses they care about, and selling de-bundled university services such as counseling, tutoring, mentoring and face-to-face interaction to students who want these.

It’s always an interesting time in higher education, but the advent of MOOCs may herald and foster an even more interesting time, an era that challenges fundamental models of university structure, certification, financing, bricks-and-mortar, technology, teaching methods and styles, and participation.

* A.Byerly (9/3/12), Commentary: Before You Jump ..., Chronicle of Higher Education.
** M. Parry. (10/5/12) 5 Ways That edX..., CHE, B6.
† B. Gose (10/5/12) 4 Massive Open Online Courses...., CHE, B10; ‡ Ibid., B11.

One Librarian’s Experience in a MOOC

Instructional enthusiasm and social grading on Coursera

Robin Davis

I have gone to class barefoot and snacked loudly without shame. I have looked at 3,000 essays close-reading the same 16-line poem. I have sniffily informed complete strangers that “conceit” is a literary term. I have been encouraged by a tenured professor to buy a $14 mug to fund refreshments at his campus writing center. I have tweeted with a class hashtag.

Over 30,000 other people are also on the roster for this shared experience, which puts the M in MOOC (massive open online course). We are all students of Professor Al Filreis at the University of Pennsylvania in a course called Modern & Contemporary American Poetry, offered for free on coursera.org. I signed up partly because it was a topic I’d missed during my own undergraduate studies and partly for my edification as Emerging Technologies and Distance Services Librarian.

The course is a good subject overview of the major schools of poetry. It is not, I think, meant to be undergraduate-level, but rather it seeks to make modern and contemporary poetry accessible, understandable, and exciting to everyone. At the time of this writing, the course is nearly half over, and I must admit that I am impressed. I had once signed up for and promptly abandoned a Natural Language Processing class on Coursera, but this time around, I’m “going to class” on a weekly (or so) basis. Prof. Filreis posts 4-10 videos (up to 30 minutes each!) of discussions on assigned poems every week. These videos feature a small round-table of sharp, confident undergrads being provoked into literary observations by Prof. Filreis, whose enthusiasm truly drives the course. The participation of these students and sometimes of visiting poets means that viewers are treated to many perspectives and interpretations of the coursework, which contrasts sharply with “just me and my webcam”-style online classes.

Course participants are encouraged to complete online assignments, which include one-question quizzes and four 500-word essays on topics covered in the videos. After submission, each essay is edited by at least two other course participants according to a simple rubric provided by the instructor. If a participant completes all writing assignments, grades others’, passes the quizzes, and participates minimally in the forums, s/he will receive a certificate of completion—though not college credit. (This is but one example of a MOOC’s course structure.)

The social grading component has been by far the most pedagogically interesting part of the MOOC experience. I had not anticipated how excited I would be to receive positive feedback on my first essay from my classmates, or how eager I would be to read strangers’ essays. It was clear that Prof. Filreis’ enthusiasm was contagious and that the five students I evaluated had done the reading and watching. Some wrote informally but exuberantly; others wrote with the dry thoroughness of people who have suffered through postgraduate degrees. I admit I was surprised that every essay I came across was written in fluent English. After the evaluation period, the essays and anonymous evaluations are posted to a forum, visible to everyone enrolled in the course. Students can upvote the essays they find most interesting. Due to this voting system, some essays have been viewed hundreds of times, inspired dozens of comments, and even been treated to a remark (always positive) from Prof. Filreis. Others, like mine, languished somewhere on page 2 through 152 with a couple of comments and views. Despite its flaws, social grading can be encouraging and serves as incentive to participate.

What makes a MOOC successful? Based on my limited experience of abandoning one boring class and participating with some frequency in another, I posit that an instructor’s extreme exuberance is a critical factor in an educational environment where students can drop out without repercussions. In addition, a MOOC succeeds when it is designed to encourage meaningful conversation among the course participants. The idea of learning from one’s peers is nothing new in education, but it takes on extra importance when a student is experiencing most of a virtual class in physical solitude and rarely, if ever, communicates directly with the instructor. Coursera, at least, is approaching a successful social model.

As their student rosters burgeon and university partnerships multiply, MOOCs are popping up with more and more frequency in higher education literature. Are MOOCs the future of education or a passing fad? Are they cause for panic or delight? Will I actually finish the course, or will I stop “attending” like 90% of MOOC students?

I am enjoying Prof. Filreis’ class, but am reluctant so far to offer an opinion about MOOCs as a whole. Meanwhile, I encourage you to sign up for one yourself to give it a try. You may, after all, be teaching one yourself soon.
Assessment at the Library

Jeff Kroessler

Assessment is a constant in the Lloyd Sealy Library. We regularly review the efficiency and thoroughness of our efforts in fulfilling our goals: providing what faculty and students require to further their research, responding to the changing needs and research habits of our patrons, and maintaining our reputation among students and faculty. Utilizing a variety of measures, our assessment efforts focus on our patrons’ satisfaction with the Library’s physical space and library services, our teaching effectiveness, our ability to support student learning and faculty research, our efforts to promote information literacy across the curriculum, and the use of library collection and electronic resources.

Assessment provides feedback that allows us to improve the library and its services. For example, the “in-library” survey of students we conducted two years ago led us to focus on providing more electrical outlets in the Niederhoffer Lounge and to emphasize planning for more quiet spaces in the Library. We responded to the high demand for computer workstations by adding twenty iMacs last year. After noticing the growing popularity of the first scanners we bought, we purchased additional ones. Similarly, to accommodate the growing number of group research assignments, we built group study rooms and plan on adding a few more of them. We regularly review the list of journals that are unavailable when our users request them online and establish access when possible. We also check usage statistics for specific databases before renewing our subscriptions.

Currently, we are replacing all broken chairs with re-upholstered ones. Among our future improvements is the unveiling of a newly redesigned website that would best serve the college community.

Lloyd Sealy’s Great-Granddaughter Visits the Library

Jacqueline Searight lives in Lake Tahoe, CA, but a trip to her “great-grandfather’s library” was the highlight of her trip east this summer. She lovingly examined photos and documents related to Lloyd Sealy and said that many were familiar to her from home. While visiting, she chanced to meet a John Jay security guard whose grandfather worked with Lloyd Sealy! After her trip, Jacqueline said she would give new thought to studying and working in a criminal justice field.

Janice Dunham
Dr. Milton Helpern was NYC’s third chief medical examiner, a position he held for 20 years. A graduate of CCNY and Cornell, he was a frequent expert witness at trials and a prolific researcher in the fledgling field of forensic science. In 1962, on his 60th birthday, the Milton Helpern Library of Legal Medicine was established at the NYU School of Medicine. In 2003 it was transferred to the Public Health Library of the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

We were offered the collection when this library began to prepare to move to a smaller facility in Long Island City. Thanks to the hard work of Gerald Singleton, Senior Counsel in the NYC Law Department, Office of the Corporation Counsel, we established legal ownership of the collection in September 2012. We now have begun cataloging the contents into appropriate locations of the Library’s collections. We anticipate this will take us several years to accomplish, but soon you should be able to find some titles in the online catalog CUNY+ by keyword searching “Helpern Library”.

The collection is currently housed in over seventy boxes containing hundreds of books, pamphlets and other print materials covering a variety of topics related to pathology, toxicology, forensic science and legal medicine. The research value of the works in the Helpern Library is in the historical documentation of the history of forensic science from the 17th century through the 1980s when acquisition of new titles stopped. This perfectly complements our forensic science collections which we have been building since the 1970s.

We have only just started to sort through these materials, but we already noted several important rare books, including:

- Théophile Bonet, *Medicina septentrionalis collatitiasive, Rei medicæ, nuperis annis à medicis Anglis, Germanis & Danis emissæ, sylloge & syntaxis…* (1684-1686, Geneva)
- Richard Mead et al., *A mechanical account of poisons in several essays* (1702, London)
- Pauli Zacchiae Romani, *Quæstionum medico-legalium…* (two editions 1726, Lugduni, Italy and 1737, Venice)
- George Fox, *Photographic Illustrations of skin diseases*. (1887, New York)
- 1959 Court materials from Vancouver murder trial of Steven Truscott [overturned in 2007]
- 1968 Naples murder trial transcript *Coppolino v State of Florida* [223 So.2d 68]

For more on Milton Helpern, please see:
- Milton Helpern and B. Knight’s *Autopsy: The memoirs of Milton Helpern, the world’s greatest medical detective* [Stacks - RA 1025 .H4 A3 1977]

For more on this or any of our special collections, please contact Special Collections Librarian Ellen Belcher at ebelcher@jjay.cuny.edu.
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