Muslim Journeys GrantBoosts Collection

During the month of April, Alden Library displayed the books and posters acquired through the “Bridging Cultures: Muslim Journeys” grant. A special showing of the film “Prince Among Slaves” in mid-April served as the presentation to the campus. Even before that event, the books in the collection began to fly off the shelves.

The “Muslim Journeys” bookshelf is a collection of 25 books and 4 videos that cover the range of biography and memoir, poetry and art, primary sources and fiction. A companion website supplements with resources on the collection and a set of scholarly essays.

The Oxford Islamic Studies Online research database of maps, images, primary sources and research materials further extends the collection.

Muslim Journeys: Companion Guide Explores American Stories

QCC adopted the “American Stories” theme from the among the six NEH categories. An online Library Guide points students to resources in the library collection and highlights ideas like “Becoming Americans.” Michael Stevenson and Dale LaBonte focus the libguide on the influence of Muslim cultures on American life.

The guide’s pages lead to authoritative sources from books to e-books and from electronic article sources to collections found on academic web pages. Faculty can link to the guide and its resources through the library homepage or by using the address URL: http://qcc.mass.libguides.com/MuslimJourneys.

Call number: LB 2331 .J34 2012

This new acquisition is a self-paced tour of modern college teaching. Jahangiri and Mucciolo provide the new professor, the adjunct instructor or the grizzled teaching veteran with a thorough grounding and review in the basics of effective instruction, and in measuring outcomes. Section titles include “Happiness” and “Energy,” two of the traits the authors feel are as vital for an instructor as grasp of content of his or her discipline.

The authors offer several interactive assessment tools to gauge levels of effectiveness correlated to learners’ preferences. Jahangiri is a department chair in the NYU College of Dentistry; Mucciolo is a presentation skills consultant and an adjunct faculty member at NYU.

— Michael Stevenson

— Dale LaBonte
A frequent faculty lament: “My students always use Wikipedia as a source for their research assignments!”

As educators, we know Wikipedia should not be used for scholarly work—and most students “know” this as well—yet the practice continues. Why?

First, it has to do with the prevalence and visibility of Wikipedia articles in search engine results. It is like showing a four-year-old a cookie and asking him not to eat it. Second, it comes down to the way assignments are crafted.

Do your assignments ask students to begin with an inquiry or research question?

If not, you might be leading students to write what might be called an encyclopedic paper.

Students who are asked to research a medical topic of their choice are likely to turn in papers filled with everything there is to know about that medical condition using factual sources, or quasi-factual sources like Wikipedia. If instead, students are required to start with a research question, e.g., “What are the challenges associated with treating cancer in patients with other diseases?” the results will necessarily be different.

Students will inevitably consult encyclopedic sources as a way to frame their understanding of their medical issue, but they will also have to use more sophisticated sources to answer their research questions.

Do your assignments require “high-quality” or “academic” sources or “resources from the Library?”

These are some of the ways faculty specify types of sources when they don’t spell out actual number of books or kinds of articles.

And do your students know how to find reputable or scholarly sources?

When working with students, Reference Librarians often present the library databases as the solution to the Wikipedia problem. When the students see the quality of information and the richness of content presented (journals, magazines, newspapers, statistics, reference works, and videos) they are impressed.

Students are still surprised to learn they can access library databases from anywhere with their QCC Student ID number. When they see the databases automatically create citations in either MLA or APA style they are astounded. Why would they ever use Wikipedia again?

Unless you want to teach critical thinking by analyzing Google search results, why not steer students to the “good stuff?”

Tempted by the cookie jar, they will unfortunately choose Wikipedia again and again.

—Matt Bejune

Strong Response to Library Survey

Numerous conversations with students and many free beverage coupons later, the Library wrapped up a three-week period when the LibQUAL online survey was open for business. In all, 1,330 responses came in, many with detailed comments. The overwhelming response from the campus puts us in good shape to have a meaningful set of results.

It truly “takes a village” to do a survey like this. Faculty, the Registrar, Marketing, Information Technology, Food Service and other departments contributed to this success, as did the students from PTK, who helped Library staff members gather responses.

LibQUAL is a survey developed by the Association of Research Libraries. Hundreds of academic libraries have run the survey. QCC will be able to compare our results with those of other community colleges.

The three-part questions asked for feedback on services, resources and spaces, with a range from expected or minimum levels to best possible. Alden Library staff will analyze the data over the summer and have results to discuss with the college community in the fall.

—Dale LaBonte and Andrea MacRitchie

A Life in Search of the ‘Secret Chord’

I’m Your Man: the Life of Leonard Cohen

by Sylvie Simmons.


Call number: ML 410 .C734 S56 2012

Boomers will recall smuggling his poems in paperback past parental eyes. Their grandchildren turn out for concert after sold-out concert by the raspy septuagenarian—who is also an ordained Buddhist monk.

Though early on he had all the stage presence of a Montreal accountant, Leonard Cohen helped stoke the 1960’s sexy vibe with his sensual poetry, prose and lyrics. In 45 plus years of songwriting he has offered up his take on canoodling in downscale hotels, on Bible stories, and on the various frosty midnights of the soul.

His acclaim arose in good part from contributions to the soundtracks of the funky 1970s Western McCabe and Mrs. Miller and, a generation later, the ogre’s tale Shrek. Who could have guessed?

He also won career boosts from a coterie of cover artists, lovers and fans (combined for a time in a fellow Canadian, Joni Mitchell).

Nearly bankrupted by his traitorous longtime manager, Cohen hit the arenas in his late 60s to rebuild his livelihood. From this solid biography, we can conclude that Cohen will continue touring, Jagger-like, for the foreseeable future.

“I’m Your Man is the major, soul-searching biography that Leonard Cohen deserves...a mesmerizing labor of love,” said Janet Maslin in The New York Times. To which we can only add “Hallelujah!”

—Michael Stevenson