News of Alden Library

INFORMATION AND USER TIPS FOR FACULTY

eBooks to Peruse, Download

Alden Library is one of three academic library test locations for a proposed statewide ebook collection. There are three platforms under consideration.

MA eBook Project

BiblioBoard packages public domain books into subject collections and allows easy browsing or searching. Many books and primary documents are historic, but there are also contemporary animations. Try the Golden Rule Cook Book from 1912 in the Vegetarianism collection or the Zombie collection’s print, audio, and video offerings. The visually appealing layout allows access without a special device. Readers also do not have to “check out” a book for a set length of time. BiblioBoard is developed as both an online reading environment and as a digital publishing framework, so content is being created by clubs, museums, and libraries.

Axis 360 has a “Magic Wall” of splashy book cover art from current best sellers. The wall is worth a look, although to reach inside the volumes, a checkout is required. The choices are current, with many mysteries, 196 books on cooking, and titles on sports, history, religion, travel, art, self-help, and more. Items of interest go into the cart and then are “borrowed” for two weeks. Viewing or listening requires special software: Adobe Digital Editions for print, Acoustik for Android or iOS for audiobooks, and others.

EBL will be familiar to QCC students and faculty who access our ebrary collection—displayed from a catalog search on topics like careers, social sciences and healthcare. EBL comes from the same vendor, ProQuest, although it will have a different layout. Take a look at the MA eBook Project trials. Your feedback will help the Massachusetts Library System decide which of the platforms to purchase.

The project is an effort to level the playing field. Libraries can be charged three times the price an individual pays for a digital volume. The Worcester Telegram and Gazette’s Elaine Thompson featured the eBook trial in a January 2014 article. The chosen collection will be made available to all Mass. residents and students. This mirrors subscriptions already shared with every library in the state, providing access to the Gale collection of databases, the searchable text of the Boston Globe, and Britannica online.

— Denise Cross and Dale LaBonte

In January, Alden Library welcomed Tiger Swan as our new Coordinator of Library Reference and Instruction. Originally from the Midwest, Tiger comes to us from Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University where he coordinated Information Literacy and Distance Learning for over 4 years. Tiger earned an MS in Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, as well as an MEd in Human Resource Education, and a BA in Russian and East European Studies. Tiger brings a passion for Information Literacy, international travel and LGBT culture.

He is happy to be back at a community college, having worked at Parkland College in Champaign IL.

Professional Development Collection


The University of Pennsylvania’s Robert Zemsky casts a cold eye on efforts to reform American higher education in this concise volume. Zemsky enumerates academia-wide problems of incoherent curricula, resistance of some campus constituencies to change, and the impact of federal investments in student aid, often accompanied by nitpicking policies for campuses.

Zemsky details the complications that have derailed reform meant to improve higher education over the decades, going back to the mythologized—in his view—Morrill Act and GI Bill. He reveals new background on their origins and the ways they have shaped academia in unforeseen ways, good and bad.

Case studies offered by Zemsky include Whittier College’s emphasis on learning outcomes and U. of Wisconsin Oshkosh’s “coherent overall curriculum.” The author recommends actions including a fundamental recasting of federal financial aid, reshaping of the undergraduate curriculum, and fostering of a stronger, more collective voice in faculty governance.

—Michael Stevenson
Adjunct Corner  New Guide: APA Style

A new, interactive guide to citing references in APA style has replaced the printed version in the link from the library’s front page. It opens with an overview—displayed above. Each tab addresses particulars of APA style, from multiple authors to references for multi-media. For those who want to print a handout, there is also a link to a pdf version.

APA style is widely used on campus. The health sciences often require it for citing, as do many faculty in the Psychology Department.

Information Literacy Make-over

When the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) announced last year that they were updating the information literacy competencies, many assumed this entailed a bureaucratic word-smithing of the original concept.

Instead, the new “Framework” is a radical re-envisioning of the role of information literacy in the academy, and a reshaping of the role librarians play. The shifted perspective encourages collaborations with faculty by aligning information literacy with disciplines, scholarly communication and knowledge production.

Threshold Concepts are the core of the new approach—ideas which students must master in order to advance, but which also open doors to greater knowledge and deeper understanding. Three proposed Threshold Concepts are: “Scholarship is a conversation; Research as inquiry; and Format as process.”

The plan builds on the success many campuses have had with incorporating information literacy into college-wide student learning outcomes. Without that body of support, the new approach would seem like an over-reach of an academic support function.

This framework is a more flexible fit for colleges where librarians teach full courses. It also supports scenarios where librarians are embedded in courses as co-instructors or guest lecturers—particularly in online sections. At QCC, where library instruction intersects with specific research assignments, the new focus reinforces students’ critical thinking as they decipher what information is, understand how it is produced, and learn how to evaluate and use it.

This is why librarians are feverishly sharing classroom tips on Twitter (#ACRLILRevisions) and mulling over instructional design in longer blog posts. It also explains how social media, gaming, and software innovations have insinuated themselves into information literacy as meta-literacies. Adoption may come as early as late summer.

Adjunct Corner  Barbal’s novel is part of a renaissance of Catalan literature, now flourishing decades after Catalan’s liberation from suppression under Franco. We are lucky to have even a small portion of this trove available in English. Barcelona resident Barbal offers a portrait—fluently rendered by Laura McGloughlin—of one resilient woman during and after the Spanish Civil War.

Conxa, the narrator of the tale from age 13, grows up as an agricultural laborer in the Pyrenees who is indentured to a childless aunt. She manages to find love, only to lose her husband Jaume to the civil war that also put her and her child under siege. Surviving the cold and hunger with her daughter and making her way through postwar austerity and repression, she looks back during her final days at everyday lives disrupted by unseen forces that can muster the power of a juggernaut.

The Financial Times noted, “There is an understated power in Barbal’s depiction of how the forces of history can shape the life of the powerless.” Reminiscent of Bertolt Brecht’s hero Mother Courage, Conxa can stand as an emblem of ordinary people overcoming the dictates of rulers and the fluctuations of fate.

For a comparable tale of a woman’s resiliency during this time period, try Nada by Carmen Lafoerit—translated from the Spanish by Edith Grossman, also in the Alden Library collection.

—Michael Stevenson