Success Through Collaboration

Academic librarians are always looking for the next opportunity to work with faculty, and the same can be said for the librarians at QCC. There are many different ways to collaborate with your librarians.

A highly visible result of interaction with faculty is the online resource guide. The librarians design these for specific programs, like Human Services, or tailor them to particular assignments, like the Speech 101 or Psychology 101 guides.

We also enjoy meeting with faculty to discuss ideas for effective assignments. Our librarian colleagues nationally are brimming with new instructional design ideas, which may be relevant to new assignments, courses, or programs under development.

What faculty members convey to the librarians about their goals helps to ensure we are better prepared to assist students when they seek our help. The exchange of information also helps the library to select the best information resources for achieving success.

A three-way collaboration with faculty in online classes, the Office of Distance Education, and the reference librarians has allowed for embedding librarians into Blackboard. This offers students extra guidance around information needs. Librarians have been working with faculty to locate appropriate open education resources (OER) for Blackboard or other platforms, an added value to programs as the focus on affordability intensifies.

When students see librarians and faculty working together, it models the workplace partnerships that will be expected of them after graduation. This also underscores the value of the library at an educational institution. Students gain an understanding of the information available to them in an academic library versus what they are used to finding on the open web, and they learn to appreciate the library tools used for locating it.

Please contact your QCC librarians to find out how we might be able to collaborate with you.

Chat Comes to the Rescue

Students have caught on to the availability of Library Chat. It helps that the button is sprinkled through our web pages. This tool lets us meet students where they research and learn—online, on smartphone, or by email.

Most often a student is up against a deadline and can’t access a database. The response to that is about using their library barcode and last name. In other cases, professors in online courses direct their students to make contact with the librarians for help starting their research. Response to these questions can be longer and more involved, as we try to parse what the student has in mind.

We very occasionally have someone make contact from the same floor, studying not far from the Reference Desk.

At the beginning of semesters faculty may ask about their library account status because they are being turned away. For anyone with an expired account, we can update the record during normal business hours. But on weekends or late evenings, we come up with other—often creative—options.

—Dale LaBonte

Professional Reading


Anthropologists have researched tribes ranging from the Trobriand Islands to the Amazon, so why not the tribe of U.S. college students? Susan D. Blum teaches at the University of Notre Dame, and was frustrated by her students’ performance, as well as by her own child’s problems in college.

Wearing her anthropologist’s hat, Blum found a mismatch between learning, which students often love, and schooling, which many hate. Ably deploying her discipline’s methods, Blum looks beyond campuses to show how Western schooling in general boasts social “oddities:” age segregation, learning out of context, an obsession with grades and rank and the purposeful production of failure.

Blum finds this structure is incongruent with the forms of learning that help students acquire worthwhile skills and knowledge, and can readily turn them off to what most would invest in heartily: exploring, joining learning communities and blossoming as engaged adults. Although Blum’s fieldwork centered on her elite private university, she sees this structural mismatch squelching learners in educational institutions far and wide. She concludes with suggestions for bringing classroom learning more in line with the way college students engage.

—Michael Stevenson
Tutorial Make-over: Library & Research Basics

The library will be retiring the SearchPath online tutorial this summer. Our plan is to create a new introduction to research and academic resources, making it just as useful to instructors, especially those teaching online classes.

While the next generation tutorial will be updated with an eye to the information literacy frameworks, the new multimedia guide will use some of the old lesson components. Those who have depended on SearchPath used its quiz results to demonstrate a student’s interactions with the tutorial. In order to gain better functionality and alignment with Blackboard, we hope to develop new quizzes suitable for the test bank.

As Denise Cross develops the new tutorial, she will be inviting faculty who use Blackboard to assist with the redesign of the assessments. The hope is that by placing the quizzes in Blackboard, faculty can add them to their assignments and seamlessly collect and measure the results against a rubric. For faculty who assigned the badge sequence, this serves as a model of the ease of integration the new modules will offer.

SearchPath was an early open educational resource (OER). It was originally developed by the University of Texas in 1998 and adapted for QCC in 2009. —Denise Cross

Latest Library Guide Surveys Public Health

To support QCC’s Public Health curricula, the latest in our STEMGuide series offers up-to-date resources in the burgeoning field. QCC’s program, as you may have read, is cooperating with UMass Medical Center and the Public Health Department of the City of Worcester to expand course offerings and internship opportunities for our students.

Our Guide should also prove useful to students in Allied Health, Biology, Nursing and Occupational Therapy.

As with its companion STEMGuides, Public Health offers selections of print material, such as a summary of The Ghost Map by Steven Johnson, the tale of a desperate hunt for sources of cholera in Victorian London. As Dr. John Snow pursued heroic efforts to trace the contagion, he pioneered many public health methodologies.

Closer to home, the guide points to The Fever of 1721: the Epidemic that Revolutionized Medicine and American Politics. Stephen Coss’s lively work shows that controversies over immunization’s benefits and dangers are not new. Of course the Guide also offers electronic sources for monitoring the field. For instance, recent findings show that our nation’s high rates of boozing, drug use, motor vehicle deaths and access to guns lower our longevity rankings compared to other advanced economies. Students are led to online searches about possible solutions to making the U.S. less of an outlier in health and wellness outcomes.

Everyone is probably aware of the Zika virus’s spread through tropical regions and now into North America. Students may search via the Guide not just for the latest Zika news, but also for news of the other big mosquito-borne danger, dengue fever. The Guide also addresses the current epidemic of opioid abuse, and offers a graphic tally of the toll of the problem on Massachusetts residents.

Back Story


John F. Kennedy served for 8 years as U.S. senator from Massachusetts, and in this book Sean J. Savage lays out how JFK’s path to the presidency began during his Senate career. Savage describes JFK, in 1952 most recently a House member, as initially focused on regional concerns, such as the postwar loss of jobs in Lowell, Worcester and other cities as the Sunbelt industrialized.

The book’s well-selected photos record Kennedy viewing damage from the Worcester tornado of 1953, a speech at Assumption College, and show Jackie passing the donuts at a 1958 campaign event here.

Savage portrays JFK’s evolution to a more national–and international–outlook as legislator and Democratic stalwart. Kennedy narrowly lost the 1956 vice presidential nomination, but devoted much time on the road campaigning for presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson, listening to and learning from a spectrum of citizens across the nation.

While JFK ended the 1950s promoting a tough national stance versus the Soviet Union and communist-led insurgencies as a foreign policy, he promoted social programs at home. He made some contribution to the push for civil rights for minorities as the 1960 presidential primaries approached. Some colleagues did accuse him of pandering to the strong southern bloc within the Democratic Party’s coalition, a legacy of FDR’s reign. A seasoned JFK would go up against one of that bloc’s own–Texas’s Lyndon B. Johnson—to achieve the party’s nomination for president in 1960.

—Michael Stevenson