

# The Queensborough Community College

## E-Newsletter

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*News, reports, questions,  
& comments about  
Queensborough's  
technology environment. A  
publication of the  
Committee on Computer  
Resources, a standing  
committee of the  
Academic Senate*

### Update on Open Educational Resources and QCC

Leslie Ward, QCC Library

In 2002, UNESCO coined the term “Open Educational Resources” as a component of the UN’s Declaration of Human Rights that “everyone has the right to an education.” Open Educational Resources (OERs) are defined by UNESCO as “teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.” There are many benefits to providing free and open content to students, most notably cost reduction. As part of the Open Education Movement, OERs also allow for maximum access to and portability of information, flexibility of course materials for faculty, and pedagogy that engages all learners.

During the 2018 – 2019 academic year QCC again took part in the New York State/CUNY \$4 million initiative to increase the creation and use of

OERs in the classroom. This funding allowed for a collaboration between CETL, the Office of Educational Technology, and the Library, led by project coordinator Elaine Farrally-Plourde, to create a new training program and workflow for OER creation and implementation. This new workflow engaged all aspects of the OER creation process moving from content selection, to understanding copyright and accessibility, and finally, launching the material for class use. This year, twenty-three faculty members across multiple disciplines were able to take part, including Art History, Psychology, Business, and Engineering Technology. The OERs created this year ranged from the adapting and modifying of open textbooks, writing and arranging new lab manuals, and converting course materials to be open and accessible online.

CUNY will be funding the OER initiative for the 2019 – 2020 academic year. If you are interested in participating, contact the Office of Academic Affairs. For more information on OERs and the Open Education Movement, contact Professor Leslie Ward ([LWard@qcc.cuny.edu](mailto:LWard@qcc.cuny.edu)) in the Library.

## Open Education Resources (OER) for your Fall 2019 courses

Adrian Bordoni, Social Sciences

The following article provides a brief explanation of what to expect when working with Open Educational Resources; I would like to thank Professors Leslie Ward and John Schriner of the QCC Library staff for generously sharing their knowledge of this subject.

When considering materials for your next syllabus and course, there is a growing trend among faculty across the country to curate or create courses based on Open Education Resources. This educational philosophy was developed in 2002 during discussions of Human Rights at the United Nations to provide not just zero or low-cost class materials but also accessibility to all types of learners.

To receive a designation as an OER course there are several items to consider. First, one should consider availability of materials. A preliminary search of Open Education Resources finds textbooks, handouts and PowerPoint presentations available at John Jay College, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, East Tennessee University and many other sources. Once you have found a suitable OER, first steps include discussing proper licensing, copyrights and a detailed Fair use outline for all materials to protect the author and to guarantee sharing and open access. Any materials that are added to a course from other OER sources means you are curating an OER course; if it is an original set of materials then it is considered creating an OER course. In both cases the documents must clearly attribute the author and it must be determined if it is limited for non-commercial use, how the information will be shared and if anyone is allowed to modify the course documents. The materials should be zero cost or at least low cost, which is considered less than \$40 dollars, so that if a student chooses to print the materials it will still be affordable.

Additionally, there are many organizations and websites that can assist professors in this effort, such as the non-profit [Creative Commons](#) which states that their mission “helps you legally share your knowledge and creativity to build a more equitable, accessible and innovative world.” Their website lists and defines many of the different terms required to establish OER status, and it connects the researcher to a large database of materials, such as 300 million images. For example, entering the term “gangs” in the search bar returns over 3,000 pictures, and most were relevant, featuring gang graffiti, police arresting suspected gang members, etc. These are all pictures readily available to embed on an E-portfolio, or to include in a handout or reader for a criminology course, so long as proper attribution and licensing is included. At the end of the link there is a short survey asking how the picture will be used.

Finally, an essential element in the OER process is accessibility for all students, especially those who might need special features to assist them such as closed caption, transcripts and screen readers. All materials, including videos from YouTube or other sources must meet these criteria to be considered OER; transcripts and closed caption can be selected at the bottom of most videos posted on YouTube.

Working to curate or create an OER course should prove to be a worthwhile project allowing for faculty and students to share information, expand educational opportunities with updated materials and relieve the worry about assigning, or purchasing, expensive textbooks. Professor Schriner and Professor Ward are dedicated to support QCC staff when considering adopting OER as part of their future coursework. They can be reached at [jschriner@qcc.cuny.edu](mailto:jschriner@qcc.cuny.edu) or [lward@qcc.cuny.edu](mailto:lward@qcc.cuny.edu).

## Accessibility Tools for ADA Compliance

David Moretti, Marketing and Communications

In today's day and age, there seems to be an abundance of tools for educational technology, leading to dizzying information overload. At Queensborough Community College (QCC), we have an ace up our sleeve: we are the home base for the [CUNY Assistive Technology Services \(CATS\)](#) and the [Media Accessibility Project \(MAP\)](#). "CATS is a team of assistive technology specialists that provide training and support on the latest technologies that assist CUNY students, faculty and staff with disabilities. Our goal is to stay on the forefront of assistive technology and provide support for those technologies used by people with disabilities who attend various CUNY campuses." MAP "strives to provide the latest information and guidelines for faculty and staff to stay up to date on accessibility throughout CUNY." While our campus is working to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), CATS and MAP are working to make the campus inclusive to all students, faculty and staff regardless of whether someone has identified with having a disability or not.

CATS and MAP do this by reaching out to faculty and departments with training and workshops. MAP provides training on making your course content accessible to all users, be it PowerPoint presentations, videos or audio for your students to review, class handouts, and even assessments on Blackboard. CATS is working with the Information Technology (IT) and Academic Computing Center (ACC) departments along with various computer lab technicians (CLTs) throughout the campus to install the CATS Assistive Technology (AT) Lab software package which consists of a screen reader, a text-to-speech and screen magnification software. Having the CATS AT Lab package installed on the computers in the labs eliminates the obligation to sit at a specific computer. They have posted support materials within Blackboard, on the [CUNY](#)

[Accessibility page](#), and on their [CATS website](#). To contact the CATS program, you can visit the Science Building Room 132, call 718-281-5014 or contact Shivan Mahabir, Assistive Technology Specialist, via email at [shmahabir@qcc.cuny.edu](mailto:shmahabir@qcc.cuny.edu) and Tania Kalaitzidis, Assistive Technology Specialist, via email at [akalaitzidis@qcc.cuny.edu](mailto:akalaitzidis@qcc.cuny.edu). The team prefers to conduct group training sessions for a collection of faculty or an entire department. Keep in mind, CATS are all part-time employees. One-on-one sessions can be set up but the preference is for group settings.

Things to consider when creating accessible course content: do not scan textbook pages. This will render those pages into an image and in some cases the image will have the outline of the hardcopy version. The image would have to be run through an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) process to make it readable by AT tools. Instead, look for properly scanned and tagged versions or an electronic version. While we're on the topic of scanning pages, do not scan a double page (e.g. both pages of a book side to side). Even if OCR was applied to the page, the screen reader will read across the document, not down the pages, thus making it impossible to understand as it is reading the text out of order. When using Word, Excel, PowerPoint, or any other Microsoft application make sure you are using an updated version (either 2013 or 2016 versions) and use the Check Accessibility tool. CATS strongly recommends Adobe Acrobat Professional DC for use with PDF files. You can contact the ACC or IT's help desk for assistance with adding this software to your faculty computer. Finally, visit the CATS website for more resources and tools. Keep asking yourself as you create your items, is this accessible? If you are unsure how to answer the question, CATS and MAP is here to help provide training and support on how to create accessible course content. CATS shares a vision with QCC in that we are all looking to move forward with accessibility, to be on the leading edge of compliance in the face of new changes to compliance laws while making our content universally accessible and inclusive to all students, current and future.

## **Don't lug your files around. Keep them on your new 1 TB cloud!**

Andrew Bulawa, Mathematics

CUNY announced last fall that they had made the Microsoft Office 365 for Education Suite available to faculty and staff. There are a number of interesting tools there, but I'd like to share with you some info on one that I've found to be particularly useful: Microsoft OneDrive for Business.

OneDrive is a file storage service like Dropbox or Google Drive. Like those services, OneDrive allows users to save files online, in the cloud, for easy access wherever they have an internet connection. A notable perk of this OneDrive for Business account is the whopping 1 TB of storage space available to each of us! Just like other cloud services, you can access the files you save on OneDrive remotely from other personal computers, tablets, and smartphones, and you can share links to files for collaboration with colleagues.

OneDrive can be accessed from a web browser, but it can also be installed as a local application. On your desktop or laptop, the storage space will appear as a standard file folder. Changes that you make to files in that folder will automatically sync with the cloud when you are online. This means you can effortlessly pick up where you left off on any other internet-connected device--no need to email yourself the files or transport them on a thumb drive. Last minute changes to your presentation on your office computer will be immediately accessible from the podium computer in your classroom.

This OneDrive for Business account will be active as long as you have active pay status at CUNY. If you already have a personal OneDrive account, this will run parallel. You can easily switch between them.

Keep in mind that certain sensitive information and confidential information such as student records

should not be stored on within the Office 365 online platform. Consult the [Office 365 for Education FAQ](#) for more information.

You can access your Microsoft Office 365 account at [portal.office.com](#) using your CUNY Login (your username, e.g., Jane.Doe##@login.cuny.edu and CUNYfirst password). Tutorials, training, and help can be accessed [here](#).

## **Virtual Machines – Living in the Future We Always Dreamed of**

Tim Keogh, History

I'm sure all of us have experienced this at one point or another: you prepare your Powerpoint lesson on your work desktop or private laptop, only to get to your classroom and realize that you forgot your USB drive, or that you never transferred the presentation to Dropbox, or most frustratingly of all, that your presentation won't load on the podium computer. It's an all too common problem, but one that could disappear entirely thanks to virtualization. Imagine having your work 'desktop' wherever you can access the internet – the same Microsoft Office suite, Adobe Acrobat package, Google Chrome tabs, and all your files whether you are in your office, classroom, at home, or at the coffee shop. You can login to your virtual desktop and begin preparing your class materials at home, log-out and commute to campus, log back in during office hours and tweak the Powerpoint, and then enter your classroom and load up the same exact 'desktop' on the podium. There would be no need to save files between computers, no unfamiliar icons or applications, no having to re-load the websites you discovered in your office. The same 'computer' is available wherever you go.

This is all possible thanks to 'virtual machines,' basically an emulation of a physical computer. With the computing power and personal files housed in host servers, the various computers we use on and off campus merely serve as access points

to your own personal virtual computer, with all the custom programs, settings, and files you're accustomed to. CUNY already has a [Virtual Desktop](#) remote software application, available to all students and faculty across all campuses, and up to 3,000 people can access the virtual desktop at the same time. But at the moment it is limited to expensive and specialized applications like ArcGIS, SPSS, SAS, Matlab, Mathematica and Maplesoft. The idea of a more fully integrated virtualization process would involve installing the more standard programs faculty, staff, and students use – Microsoft Office, Adobe, Camtasia, etc. – so that we no longer have to switch between programs, operating systems, or licenses when doing our work.

The advantages for faculty and students are obvious, but as Computer Laboratory Technician Peter Irigoyen contends, the college stands to benefit as well. For one, departments would no longer be limited to certain classrooms with their preferred suite of applications; instead, professors can utilize the entire campus since the virtual

machine can open anywhere. CLTs and IT no longer have to install and update applications across every computer on campus. Perhaps most importantly, the college won't have to replace computers so often, since the computing power will be housed in servers, providing long-term savings to the college, university, and by extension, taxpayers. The drawbacks don't differ much from the problems that already plague any campus network – downed servers may put a damper on a worknight, but anyone who has worked at any large institution is already familiar with network woes long before virtualization.

While QCC has yet to implement virtual machines, faculty and staff should mobilize for virtualization. The upfront costs will pay for themselves in a few years, while faculty, students, and staff will benefit from the mobility, ease of use, and access that virtualization offers. A wide variety of colleges and businesses have used virtual machines for years; its time QCC joins them.

[The Committee on Computer Resources is Tim Keogh (Co-Chairperson), Darryl A. Williams (Co-Chairperson), Tim Keogh (Secretary), Andrew Bulawa, Leslie Ward, Mike Cesarano, Cheryl Spencer, Jill Bellovary, Adrian Bordoni, and David Moretti; Lin Rong, Kyle Enriquez, and Chanele Rodriguez (Student Representatives), Jed Shahar and Lucien Makalanda (Steering Committee Liaisons), Christine Mooney (COC Liaison), and Bill Faulkner (President's Liaison).

Thank you to all our committee members, student representatives, liaisons, and associated faculty and staff for a productive year.]