Open Educational Resources at QCC
By Professor Bill Blick, QCC Library

The use of Open Educational Resources represents a noble cause, but the idea often remains elusive for many faculty members. In 2015, librarians at Queensborough Community College of the City University of New York, implemented a campaign to promote and facilitate the use and development of OERs. The primary objective was to reduce the growing financial burden on students in textbook purchase requirements. Concomitant goals were to provide instructors with greater academic control and freedom in course content, and to add to the pool of knowledge and resources for collaborative faculty work. The core of the Queensborough campaign was the offer of grants to foster the creation of OERs. The campaign was successful, resulting in the growing presence of OERs on campus steadily gaining momentum.

In 2017, QCC Library continued its role as facilitators of OERs on campus. Library faculty recently implemented a grant program for faculty interested in creating OERs for their courses. Stipends will be awarded for attendance at Library sponsored workshops focusing on finding OERs, ADA compliance, and copyright. The OER team at QCC consists of Professors Sheila Beck, Bill Blick, Sandra Marcus, Leslie Ward, and Connie Williams.

In addition to grant awards and sponsored programs, QCC Faculty encourages the use of Academic Works, CUNY's Institutional Repository for the dissemination of OERs to an Open Access audience. Faculty members who have utilized Academic Works have seen their work downloaded hundreds of times across the world. It is the ambition of the OER team to encourage more faculty members to use zero-cost resources in their pedagogy to relieve financial burdens of education for needy students. With the increasing high costs of texts, it is unfortunate that many students struggle to meet the requirements of courses. With the OER initiative, there is a mutual benefit for students and faculty.

Governor Cuomo recently announced a four million dollar initiative to support OERs at CUNY schools. QCC Library faculty members are on the cusp of bringing these beneficial finances to the OER initiative at QCC. With continued interest, support, and diligence, it is the hope that students and faculty will make substantial changes in the way course materials are used and disseminated.For more information about OER's at Queensborough click here.

Apps for Academics
By Professor Andrew Bulawa, Mathematics and Computer Science

There are plenty of applications for our computers and mobile devices. Many apps are for play but some are for work. In this article, I will point out a few apps which can make your work as a faculty member easier.

First and foremost, you should be aware of the "Teaching with Apps" service offered the Office of Educational Technology (OET). Through this service, Instructional Technology Coordinators introduce instructors to a variety of educational apps that can enhance your teaching and learning experience. I can attest from personal experience that the OET is worth consulting! The OET is located in the library building, room L-117.

Next, I'd like to share some news about the Starfish Early Alert System. Undoubtedly you've heard of the web application for Starfish which has been active for several years now. Instructors use Starfish to track and comment on student performance. Academic advisers then act on those comments to help keep struggling students on track. According to Starfish technical lead, Ed Molina, a mobile app version of starfish is in the works which "formats nicely on an iPad and other tablets. In addition to course kudos, referrals to tutoring and academic flags, there is an attendance feature that allows instructors to track attendance for each course section and report attendance data through an attendance report in Excel format." Be sure to give Starfish a try if you haven't already, and keep your eyes out for the mobile app planned for release in Fall 2017.

If you find organizing citations and producing bibliographies tedious, you should check out RefWorks. The RefWorks application helps you maintain a database of resources for citation in future works. It allows you to easily generate a bibliography as a standalone file or process a document, automatically formatting citations and appending a bibliography at the end. RefWorks can be accessed by QCC students and faculty through the library website. A mobile version of the website is available here.

Finally, I'd like to point out a few more mobile apps which faculty here at QCC have good things to say about. The first is Tiny Scanner, by Appxy, for iOS and Android. Tiny Scanner allows you to scan a document simply by photographing it with a mobile device. Tiny Scanner will automatically rotate the image, correct distortions due to perspective, and adjust the white balance. It can output a PDF in color, grayscale, or black & white. Next, two teaching management apps worth mentioning are Teacher's Aide, by Room 220, and GradeBook Pro, by Eric Lombardo, both for iOS. These course management apps allow you to record, store, and export attendance and grades from your mobile device. Teacher's Aide is attractive because it permits management of up to three courses for free. GradeBook Pro requires a fee, but some consider it to be more advanced.

I hope you've found something on this list worth checking out. I wish you all many appy days to come!

What is Virtualization?
Professor Jed Shahar of the English Department recently interviewed Darryl Williams, CLT for the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and current Co-Chair of the Computer Resources Committee, about virtualized computing at Queensborough Community College.

Jed Shahar: What is virtualization?

Darryl Williams: I guess the easiest way to put it is that it's a traveling computer. One that you can access from anywhere, as long as you have a network, and it's the same desktop, no matter where you travel to.

JS: Could you explain how that differs from what generally exists in computer classrooms?

DW: Right now, the location of a machine is the only particular place you can access that machine. Your files, your programs, your layout, that's all on one computer. If you personalize your computer here [pointing at the desktop in Professor Shahar's office], it doesn't necessarily mean you'll have the same layout in another room, but with virtualization, that's possible.

JS: So how many classrooms now are virtualized in the Humanities building?

DW: Right now, there's one fully virtual classroom, but others can convert because we have the software that allows for that.

JS: Besides the setup and costs, are there any other drawbacks to the virtualization setup?

DW: Well, those aren't even drawbacks. Either way you go, you have to do a similar setup. You have to setup a regular PC too. There's just a few different steps when you do a virtualization. And for cost, the initial cost for virtualization is higher than the standard PC, but over time virtualization outlasts a standard PC, so it does actually save money.

JS: Why does it outlast the standard PC?

DW: On the user end, you don't have a CPU box. You have a monitor, a keyboard, and a mouse, and you don't have to update those as frequently.

JS: So there's a server?

DW: Yeah, the server does all the work, and even the regular servers are built to have a longer life cycle than the standard PCs.

JS: How many servers do you need for each virtualized room?

DW: One server handles two virtualized rooms. It's called a hypervisor. The cool thing about it is all the hypervisors, they talk to each other. So if one room stays off or down, a hypervisor can transfer its resources to another room, so there's more processing power and more memory.

JS: Is there a plan to build more virtual classrooms?

DW: Downstairs, on the second floor of the Humanities building, a large lab space is being converted into three separate rooms, and one of those will be a virtual room. Going forward, it is possible that more rooms will have virtualization.

JS: Do you think eventually the whole Humanities building will be virtualized?

DW: That is certainly a possibility. CUNY central is pushing hard for virtualization. They have servers running at central and they push out the machines to various campuses.

JS: And is the Humanities building the only one that has virtualization right now?

DW: Math bought the equipment. They're doing the work to set it up now. They bought the servers, and they're setting up the classrooms now. They tested it, and they loved it.

JS: Who piloted the virtualization here?

DW: It was a collaboration between English, PJ Irigoyen, and Foreign Languages.

JS: Finally, does it affect the interface the professors have at the podium?

DW: You would never notice. If anything, you'll like it because like I said you travel with your PC. So let's say you are here [in your office] during your office hour, and you set up a lesson plan and files, when you go to the classroom, you log into the same computer, and it'll be the same desktop, the same files, the same everything.

Email Etiquette for Students
By Professor Leah Anderst, English

A familiar scenario: It's late in the evening on a weekend. You're on your phone, and you open the email application. (You know you shouldn't … work-life balance, and so on, but you do it anyway.) You find an email from a student. You open it. It has nothing in the subject line. It has no words in the body. It has an attachment, about which you have questions: Is this the student's late paper that should have been turned in on Blackboard last week? Is this a late homework assignment? Is this an in-class assignment that the student completed on her laptop? You don't know because the student hasn't told you. The student doesn't understand how to communicate with you via email.

As an instructor of writing and writing intensive courses, I've received countless emails like this. While they're frustrating to get, they also point to a lack in students' understanding of writing genres, a lack that we can help them overcome. A few semesters ago I included a section in all of my syllabi: a section on "Email Etiquette." Cribbing from a friend, here's what it says:

- *Email Etiquette*: We will write in a variety of styles throughout the semester from informal, in-class writing to polished, formal essays. Email to your professors will fall somewhere between those two styles. Here are some tips:
    - o Identify yourself clearly in the email (your name), and include a greeting (Hello, Dear Prof, etc.) and a closing (From, Sincerely, Thanks, etc).
    - o Use "please" and "thank you," especially if you are writing for help with an assignment. It's my job to help you, and I want to help you, but good manners never hurt anybody.
    - o Please be reasonable when emailing with questions about papers. Leave yourself enough time. If you email me at 3 a.m. the night before a paper is due, I cannot help you. I answer email as promptly as I can, but I usually stop dealing with email by 9 p.m. and start up again around 9 a.m. after

I am sufficiently caffeinated. I'm available by email most weekends, but I'm slower to respond.
    - o **Look in the syllabus first if you're emailing to ask a question**. Many of your questions are already answered there.
    - o If you send an assignment to me via email please send it as a word document attachment, and be sure to tell me what you're sending and why.

To follow up on this syllabus section, I give a homework assignment during the first week of the semester: "Send me an email (LAnderst@qcc.cuny.edu) from your QCC Tigermail account. Following the guidelines in "Email Etiquette," explain two things from a past writing class you have taken: 1) what you found most helpful and 2) what you found most difficult."

That first week is marked by a flurry of nicely worded emails and reflections on previous courses, and most of the subsequent emails students send me over the semester follow suit. Every now and then I do still receive an attachment and nothing else or an email that just doesn't strike the right tone, for instance, an email that says only, "WHATS DUE TOMORROW?!" By and large, though, this syllabus description of "Email Etiquette" and the accompanying homework assignment has greatly improved the online communications between me and my students.

Podia Classroom Coverage Nearing Completion, Training Available
By Professor Matthew Lau, English, and Mark Chropufka, ACC Academic Technology Manager

As of June 2017, Queensborough Community College will have full podia coverage for all classrooms where the technology is feasible, i.e. adequate room size. If you are teaching in a particular multimedia classroom (aka a "smartroom") for the first time you will need to inform your department assistant. The assistant in turn will send your ID card information to DoorAccess@qcc.cuny.edu so your card can access the swipe lock. Click here for a list of rooms that include podia.

The Academic Computing Center (ACC) offers training for classroom podia. The training will be especially beneficial to faculty who have not used the systems before. Click here to view a tutorial for a Nomad podium. Click here to view a tutorial for the new CP-II system.

Additionally, more experienced users of the systems may also benefit from an ACC provided workshop and if interested in receiving training you may contact Mark Chropufka, mchropufka@qcc.cuny.edu. As you have probably noticed, many classrooms now have newer systems, as the previous generation of podia are being replaced. Now that we have full podia coverage, the systems will be replaced on a seven year cycle.

If you are having issues or need assistance, ACC's phone number is 718-631-6624. For training or unresolved issues with podia, contact Mark Chropufka, ACC Academic Technology Manager – mchropufka@qcc.cuny.edu.

The Committee on Computer Resources is Darryl A. Williams (Co-Chairperson), Matthew Lau (Co-Chairperson), Andrew Bulawa, Leslie Ward, Michael Cesarano, Marlon Moreno, M. Chantale Damas, Merlinda Drini, Anissa Moody, Lin Rong (Student Representative), Kyle Enriquez (Student Representative), Chanele Rodriguez (Student Representative), Lucian Makalanda (Steering Committee Liaison), Jed Shahar (Steering Committee Liaison), 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.