Changing the World Through Student Empowerment

Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I’ll understand.

– Chinese Proverb

In March the Leonard Lief Library offered a reception celebrating the acquisition of two major new collections: the libraries of theatre professor Albert Bermel and education theorist Maxine Greene. What struck audience members is that both presentations independently invoked the role of the arts in changing the world:

The arts, it has been said, cannot change the world, but they may change human beings who might change the world.

– Maxine Greene

The Bermel family donated a plaque to the College containing this description of Professor Bermel:

He believed in the potential of the arts to change students.
He believed in the potential of students to change the world.

Here in the Library we see our primary role and mission as student empowerment: to provide Lehman students with the tools and techniques to function as independent learners.

This not only encompasses fostering student achievement and proficiency in their major field of study, but also helping them to become engaged, global citizens in pursuit of lifelong learning. In other words, our task is both simple and complex: to help students learn how to learn, and take responsibility for their own learning.

For better or worse, information is being generated today at an overwhelming, even alarming, rate. For all of us – librarians included! – it is a struggle to distinguish between true knowledge, corporate propaganda masquerading as independent research studies, the ostensible objectivity of Big Data vs. evidence-based inquiry, in a profit-driven market where we have willingly ceded control of information to conglomerates that reassure us, Don’t Be Evil.

Continued on page 2
Taking this as our starting point, how can we understand Information Literacy threshold concepts as empowering? Let’s take one of the more well-known concepts that have emerged from the Framework: “Scholarship is a conversation.” A grasp of this threshold concept opens the mind to the idea that scholars are engaged in active research projects informed by and in dialogue with other scholars working in an area, each of whom is adding to, challenging, or supporting the established understanding of something important to their field. In itself, this conceptual way of understanding scholarly production empowers the student by demystifying the work of academics, making it clear that experts do not create new knowledge in a vacuum, but rather through a collaborative project with historical and sociocultural contexts.

We can also design learning activities that give students a sense that they, too, can contribute to the conversation, if only in a tangential way at first. One activity I’ve recently tried is to ask students to list five characteristics of a good conversation or a good conversationalist.

Kenneth Schlesinger
Chief Librarian

ACRL’s Framework for Information Literacy: Empowering Students

In the Fall 2014 issue of Biblio-Tech, we introduced the Association of College and Research Library’s (ACRL) Framework for Information Literacy and the idea of threshold concepts – those transformative concepts or ideas within a discipline that open the door to further learning. In this issue, we’d like to consider how this new Framework for understanding Information Literacy learning can help empower students when we bring it to bear on our instruction in the Library.

First, what do we mean by “empower?” Let’s be clear that “empowering” is not something that we as educators “do” to students. Unfortunately, that’s a hard connotation to shake off, for power is often exercised by faculty over students in a variety of overt and covert ways. Rather, let us consider “empowerment” as something anyone can achieve when he or she takes control of his or her own mind. Let’s think of it as a way of being in the world that tends towards a state or condition of freedom or one that affords freedom.

Since Knowledge is Power was first brought to us by 16th century British philosopher Francis Bacon, we have seen that information is a precious commodity whose control can be advantageous. It is no surprise that repressive regimes silence journalists, imprison writers, crush dissent, wish to control the Internet (which is uncontrollable), and shut down social media. After all, an autocratic government in the Philippines was brought down by citizens texting on cellphones in order to congregate for a mass protest.

Lehman recently developed its Characteristics of a Lehman Graduate (http://www.lehman.edu/engage/), describing desired competencies for students completing their baccalaureate, including the compelling phrases Educated, Empowered, Engaged – concepts directly related to this discussion.

Not surprising to us, the majority of these skills comprise the ability to successfully navigate and critically evaluate the information environment: critical thinking, information literacy, quantitative reasoning, research proficiency. Ultimately, this places the Library front and center in promoting student achievement and success at Lehman College.

Kenneth Schlesinger
Chief Librarian

Continued on page 3
Having done this a number of times, I know that students are aware of how to conduct good conversations! They know that a good conversation has an interesting topic or takes a fresh approach to a topic, that the speaker’s style must be appropriate to the audience, that there are moves you can make in a conversation (you can agree, disagree, or partially agree or disagree, etc. with your interlocutor), and that a conversation takes place in a medium that either allows for synchronous or asynchronous exchange. Most importantly, Lehman students understand that a good conversationalist is well informed and can cogently argue a point, backing it up with evidence or reasons.

Confident in their abilities to have good conversations with their friends, family, and even professors, it’s a short leap for students to see how these very skills are what makes for good academic writing and that they have the power to join any conversation.

Robert Farrell

Library Event and Video Series Brings Faculty Research into Focus

On April 22, the Library held its spring Innovation event, which highlighted our new Faculty Research Video Interview Series.

This series, which consists of video interviews with faculty across the disciplines, was conceived and spearheaded by library faculty Robert Farrell, and has benefited from the active support of Saeedah Hickman, Director of Research and Sponsored Programs.

The Video Series seeks to explore:

- What motivates faculty
- What initially involved them in their research
- Research practices they employ – and how this might include library resources
- Identifying research best practices or protocols in their disciplines
- Research expectations for students – and how they model research behavior in the classroom and laboratory

Faculty love to talk about their research. It’s something they’re invested in and feel passionate about. With so much to explore, Farrell has designed the process to begin with 90-minute interviews that are ultimately distilled into two- or five- minute videos. These can be applied to multiple purposes across the College.

The first of the videos will be released soon. Interviews with additional faculty will be conducted throughout the spring and summer. At the April event, Farrell explained the rationale for the project — to expose the research habits of advanced scholars to undergraduate students — and invited Chiseche Mibenge (Political Science) and Ryan Raaum (Anthropology), the first two interview participants, to comment on the project and experiences discussing their research with students.

A thoughtful discussion followed, as well as an activity in which Farrell invited attendees to brainstorm ways they might use the video interviews with students.

We believe the Leonard Lief Library is the first to initiate this kind of Video Series focusing exclusively on discipline faculty research behavior.

Kenneth Schlesinger

ACRL’s Framework for Information Literacy (cont.)

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Robert Farrell
CUNY Academic Works was launched in April 2015 as a service from CUNY Libraries to provide access to the research, scholarship, and creative work of the City University of New York. The Graduate Center Library was the first to begin administering a campus Academic Works repository (http://works.gc.cuny.edu/). All CUNY campuses eventually will have an instance of CUNY Academic Works for content created by its own community, including students, faculty, and staff.

We are pleased to announce that the Library will launch Lehman Academic Works in the fall. This spring, CUNY Scholarly Communications Librarian Megan Wacha and University Director of Library Systems Greg Gosselin conducted a roadshow for CUNY libraries to kick-start the development of Academic Works.

Lehman’s Library had a productive and exciting discussion with Megan and Greg to plant the seeds for our repository. We looked at Digital Commons, software licensed from bePress (Berkeley Electronic Press), the leading hosted institutional repository software for colleges and universities. Lehman’s instance of Academic Works will have the same design and functionality as the Graduate Center’s. In fact, all CUNY repositories will be linked and searchable as one large repository.

Who can submit content to Academic Works?

Content from current faculty, staff, and students will be accepted into the repository. Lehman Academic Works will focus first on faculty research such as articles, book chapters, and conference presentations. The Library’s Scholarly Communications Committee will work over the summer with Megan Wacha to initiate the repository with scholarly articles by Lehman faculty. Foremost on our agenda will be to establish guidelines for new submissions by faculty in all disciplines. Our priority will be to make the process easy for faculty to preserve and share their scholarly and creative work.

Why should faculty submit content to Academic Works?

The main reason is to increase the impact of scholarly and creative work, which will be searchable in major search engines such as Google Scholar, as well as the Library’s OneSearch. Further, faculty will share their work with scholars and students who might not have access to it, promote collaboration with colleagues at other CUNY campuses, and increase the visibility of Lehman’s outstanding faculty research.

Stay tuned over the coming months for news from the Library on the why and how of submitting your work to Lehman Academic Works. We hope the repository will grow into an impressive showcase of faculty and student work, as well as a valuable resource for research in all disciplines.

Questions about Academic Works?

Contact Chief Librarian Kenneth Schlesinger, and Scholarly Communications Committee Co-Chairs Madeline Cohen and Jennifer Poggiali.

Madeline Cohen
Faculty Authors – Know Your Rights

Do you know your rights as an author? Here are some key points to get started:

Begin by researching the copyright and self-archiving policies of journals and publishers. SHERPA/RoMEO is an invaluable tool for finding this information about journals in all disciplines:

http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/

A majority of journals allow authors to archive some version of their articles in open access repositories. According to SHERPA/RoMEO (http://tinyurl.com/sherpa-romeo-nov11), as of November 2011:

- 87% of scholarly journals allow immediate self-archiving of some version of the article
- 60% of scholarly journals allow immediate self-archiving of the post-refereed version (including 16% that allow immediate self-archiving of the final, published PDF)
- After expiration of embargo periods (usually six to 24 months), 94% allow self-archiving of the post-refereed or PDF version of the article

If you don’t have self-archiving rights, there may be other options. Ask your publisher.

Master’s Thesis Survey

Lehman’s Master’s Thesis Repository holds theses and capstone projects completed by Master’s students. These materials were originally collected in print. The Library has bound theses up through 2006. Projects from 2006 to the present are available online through the digital Master’s Thesis Repository.

We recently noticed that we were receiving fewer submissions to the Repository. We wondered why, so we designed a survey to gather information from Lehman Master’s advisers about culminating projects in their programs.

The survey consists of questions in the following areas:

- Requirements: Is there a thesis or capstone project requirement?
- Technical Formats: What is the format of the project? What are the technical requirements for viewing the project?
- Permissions: Are there IRB or other permissions in place?
- Access: Are the projects stored elsewhere, if not in the Repository?

Information gathered from the survey will help us determine next steps for the Repository and how to best serve academic departments and students.


Alison Lehner-Quam
In 2013, Art Department’s Michael Ferraro and I were recipients of a $25,000 Sparks! Ignition Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Throughout the 2013-2014 academic year, we used this grant to develop an animated character, Jasmyn, who we can now use in sophisticated and cost-effective animated instructional tools.

Jasmyn is built using the Kabuki Realtime Animation software designed and owned by Ferraro. Unlike traditional animation, in which completing a 30-second video requires painstaking effort, Kabuki enables characters to be animated “on the fly” by calling on a database of gestures, movements, facial expressions, and mouth positions. The character’s body is controlled by “puppeteers” armed with keyboards and a foot pedal, and her lips move in response to words spoken into a microphone. This makes Kabuki incredibly cost-effective.

One of our goals for Jasmyn was to create a character that Lehman students would find appealing and relatable. For her look and personality, we turned to our pre-existing Web Comic series, The Researchers (see “Newest Library Web Comic Explores Art Nouveau”). Jasmyn was created for this series by Lehman art majors who drew their inspiration from the students around them. In writing the script for the grant video, I strove for a conversational and relaxed tone, and tried to be appropriately idiomatic. Finally, we enlisted the help of voiceover artist and Lehman graduate Christina Pagan to bring Jasmyn’s vocal personality to life.

We were gratified to find that students in our three focus groups enjoyed the results. One student commented:

“What I like about the character is that she’s relatable, especially for the demographic that is getting the information...Because sometimes, depending on who’s giving us information, we actually judge it. We make it biased, sometimes, so when we see a character we can relate to, we kind of take in the information more easily than we would have from a different person.”

On the whole, students in the focus groups also responded positively to the notion of learning from animation. These results support our initial premise that innovative teaching tools, even long ones, can hold the attention of students. Students observed:

“Yeah, she was able to get my attention. I mean, it’s not—it was a cartoon so it was better than being taught by a regular person... I want something to be more entertaining. Something with color.”

The majority of students enjoyed Jasmyn and the learning experiences we created with her, and they had clear recommendations for how we could use her effectively in other educational contexts.

We plan to seek additional funding to:

♦ Build a platform for Jasmyn to be used as a real-time virtual tutor
♦ Develop a series of course-related modules that can be used to supplement course readings and lectures
♦ Enhance Jasmyn’s range of gestures and facial expressions

The process of creating Jasmyn and the videos she stars in was collaborative. Michael managed the animation and video production, oversaw staff and student interns, and assembled the final videos. I wrote the script and learning objectives, created assessment tools, and conducted the focus groups. We relied on help from animation professionals, art student interns, discipline faculty, and many other colleagues to bring the project to completion.

We hope the results will provide ongoing benefits to the Lehman community. Stay tuned for more videos starring Jasmyn!

Jennifer Poggiali
Newest Library Web Comic Explores Art Nouveau

We’re proud to announce publication of our latest Web Comic, “Who’s Art Nouveau?” This is the third issue of the Library’s ongoing Web Comic series, available at http://wp.lehman.edu/library/comics.

In this issue, Francisco Morillo, one of the recurring cast of characters known as The Researchers, delves into the world of Art Nouveau. This 20th century art movement spanned multiple countries and touched all aspects of visual art, including painting, graphic design, decorative art, and architecture.

Francisco must navigate this large subject to identify an area of exploration that interests him. Luckily, he happens upon Hector Guimard, a French architect with some unique qualifications, who provides crucial advice that helps Francisco narrow and define his research focus.

It was my pleasure and privilege to collaborate with Michael Ferraro and Sharon Jordan in the Art Department, and Lehman student Melissa Puma (’14) to develop this comic.

In addition to writing this comic, I’ve designed a worksheet to help students apply its lessons to their own research project. So far, students in several sections of our freshman writing class (ENG 121) have found the worksheet and comic useful and entertaining. Please find both on the Lehman Comics site, http://wp.lehman.edu/library/comics.

We hope you enjoy reading it, and encourage you to incorporate it into your instructional program. Please share your results with us.

Jennifer Poggiali
Celebrating Acquisition of the Bermel and Greene Collections

On March 24, the Library, School of Arts and Humanities, and School of Education celebrated our acquisition of the Albert Bermel Collection and the Maxine Greene Collection.

Professor Albert Bermel, former chair of Lehman’s Speech and Theater Department and Graduate Center faculty member, was a well-known playwright, theater critic, teacher, and translator of classic works. He formerly taught theater at Columbia and Yale.

Bermel’s collection includes 2,000 volumes of theater and film criticism and extensive dramatic literature. His family also donated unpublished manuscripts, instructional resources, as well as a large number of Playbills from the 1970s to the present. These will be housed in the Library’s Special Collections.

At the celebration, Arts and Humanities Dean Deirdre Pettipiece spoke of the value of the Bermel Collection.

The Bermel family (wife Joyce and son Derek) presented a plaque, with Derek doing the honors, to Chair of Journalism, Communication, and Theater Patricio Lerzundi.

School of Education Dean Harriet Fayne spoke affectionately of Maxine Greene and her influence on Lehman faculty and students:

“How lovely and fitting that Maxine Greene’s collection will be housed at Lehman. So many Lehman faculty and students have been inspired by her words and actions.

“Our involvement in aesthetic education is a tribute not only to her prolific scholarship, but also to her remarkable ability to teach others.”

Greene’s scholarship and love of reading was highlighted by Holly Fairbank, Executive Director of the Maxine Greene Center for Aesthetic Education and Social Imagination. Lehman Education professor Amanda Gulla then shared a poem based on words in Maxine Greene’s Variations on a Blue Guitar.

For many years to come, Lehman’s students and faculty will enjoy exploring these diverse collections, amassed by two admirable scholars and humanists.

Robin Wright

More About the Maxine Greene Collection

Maxine Greene was a driving force in education. Her lectures and writings helped influence how educators teach the arts. She founded and directed the Center for Social Imagination, the Arts, and Education at Columbia’s Teachers College, where she was on the faculty.

A group of Lehman faculty was invited to Greene’s apartment to make selections from her personal library. They returned with 40 boxes of books, comprising about 1,400 titles on education, philosophy, literature and poetry, women’s studies, and public affairs.

Edwin Wallace
An important part of the event was discussion about document accessibility for students. Students stated that image PDFs were inaccessible given that screen readers (e.g., JAWS) are not able to read documents out loud. Students recommended that faculty and staff create and save documents as “true text” documents. This requires those creating original documents to use Microsoft Word, and then converting them into PDFs.

With “true text” PDFs, characters are recognized by assistive technology software programs that students use to read these documents. Faculty and staff who don’t have access to the original text file of a document must use OCR tools such as AbbyFine Reader or Adobe Acrobat to convert an image PDF into a Microsoft Word document or accessible PDF.

The Assistive Technology Center, located on the Library’s second floor, provides technical support to students with disabilities. For more information, please contact Stephanie Arriola, Stephanie.Arriola@lehman.cuny.edu, 718-960-1167.

Rebecca Arzola

Just Listen

Are you absorbing the information conveyed in your classes? Do you want to remember more and better understand what your professor is saying? You can through Active Listening.

How?

✦ In class, sit where you can see the instructor and won’t be distracted
✦ Sit up, stop talking, and prepare yourself to listen
✦ Consciously choose to be attentive and stay in the moment
✦ Be teachable and growth-minded
✦ Be open to listening to other points of view
✦ Suspend judgment
✦ Focus on what is being emphasized and identify key points
✦ Listen for the professor’s verbal clues: “This is important”
✦ Take notes while you listen and observe. This reinforces understanding.
✦ Paraphrase your understanding and ask questions for clarification
✦ Complete all assigned readings before class to better understand course content
✦ Review your notes, reflect on and synthesize what was said

Being an active listener requires taking personal responsibility for your learning. It demands patience and practice, but is worth the effort. You’ll find it makes learning new things more enjoyable and empowers you to succeed in your studies.

Janet Butler Munch
Child Care Center Children Visit Library

This spring a group of children from Lehman’s universal pre-kindergarten class visited to discover how the Leonard Lief Library works. They met with library faculty and staff who organized activities to help them learn about library operations.

The UPK class has been learning about community workers. UPK Head Teacher Olga Spearman and Assistant Teacher Raphaelina Vargas have been helping the children identify and learn about how community workers contribute. The Library visit expanded children’s knowledge of library community workers.

As part of a program developed by Education Librarian Alison Lehner-Quam, library faculty offers monthly read alouds for Child Care Center children. Prior to this field trip, Lehner-Quam asked the children what they might expect to see in a library. Their list included books, people reading, and computers.

Mena asked children to help sort books by the first letter in the call number. The children sorted them and also found a few they wanted to borrow.

This visit, inspired by Education professor Carol Gross’ early childhood education social studies class, had a delightful outcome: now when the children are asked about what they will find in a library, at the top of the list is a librarian.

Children’s Book Collection

Children stopped by the children’s book display area on the third floor. Children’s books are used by Education students for fieldwork assignments and student teaching. The children each selected a book. Children met with Education Library Assistant Wendy Brenner to learn how children’s books are color-coded for ease in shelving.

Technical Services: Unpacking and Processing Books

Jennifer King and Acquisitions Assistant Bienvenida Del Castillo asked children to help them unpack a new box of books. They also processed a new children’s book by adding the barcode, due date slip, and call number.

Shelving

In the stacks management room, books are sorted by call number before shelving. Stacks Supervisor Elizabeth
New Databases

Thanks to Student Technology Fees, the following databases are now available.

Civil War Primary Source Documents
The collection, drawn from the holdings of the New-York Historical Society, is comprised of over 110,000 pages from over 400 individual collections, and focuses on the War as it was fought from both Northern and Southern perspectives.

Health and Psychosocial Instruments
Produced by Behavioral Measurement Database Services, this comprehensive bibliographic database is abstracted from hundreds of leading journals covering health sciences and psychosocial sciences. It also provides information about behavioral measurement instruments, including those from Industrial Organizational Behavior and Education.

Faculty Professional Activities

On May 1, REBECCA ARZOLA, Stephanie Arriola, and Lauren McCarthy presented “Apps and Technology Share: A Student Disability Services and Library Collaboration” at the 6th Annual CUNY Accessibility Conference - Student Success in the Digital Age at John Jay College.

In January 2015, REBECCA ARZOLA and STEFANIE HAVELKA published “Mobile Apps in Collection Development: Supporting a Mobile Learning Environment” in The Charleston Advisor.


Dr. Munch led a discussion of Irish Echo Editor Ray O’Hanlon’s book The New Irish-Americans at CUNY Graduate Center.

On February 27 and 28, ALISON LEHNER-QUAM, Limor Pinhasi-Vittorio, and Amanda Gulla presented two workshops at Kentucky’s Morehead State University. Inquiry and Creativity in Education: Fostering Dialogue Between Teacher Educators and Arts and Sciences Faculty was attended by College of Education faculty. Inquiry and Creativity in Education: Making Space for the Imagination in the Time of the Common Core was attended by P-12 educators and student teachers.

In March, JENNIFER POGGIALI presented “You’re No Fun Anymore: The Ethics of Acquiring Electronic Devices in Light of E-Waste, Sweatshops, and Globalization” at the ACRL 2015 Conference in Portland, Oregon. Her paper has been published in the online conference proceedings.

KENNETH SCHLESINGER will be co-leading a planned visiting delegation of CUNY librarians and archivists to Cuba in January 2016 with Sarah Aponte (City College) and Tess Tobin (City Tech).

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Spring Training for Librarians

On May 15, CUNY’s Information Literacy Advisory Council (LILAC) held its annual spring event, “Spring Training: Stellar Ideas for the Library Classroom.” The event consisted of five concurrent sessions focused on current trends in information literacy and library instruction, each led by CUNY library faculty. Over 40 librarians from the Tri-State area attended the event, hosted by City College and organized by LILAC’s Co-Conveners Julia Furay (Kingsborough) and Robert Farrell (Lehman), along with other LILAC members.

Helen Georgas (Brooklyn) led a discussion session on the impact of new webscale discovery services, like CUNY’s OneSearch, on library instruction practices and other areas of IL teaching and learning. Alevtina Verbovetskaya (CUNY Office of Library Services) provided insight into the technical side of webscale discovery.

Jean Amaral’s (BMCC) session, “Start Where You Are: Contemplative Practices for Teaching and Learning,” introduced participants to mindfulness and other contemplative techniques for developing optimal learning conditions in the classroom and better relationships with students.

Galina Letnikova (LaGuardia) and Mickey Laskin (Hostos) provided participants an opportunity to play a number of IL-related games and develop their own criteria to evaluate IL games.

Attendees interested in embedded instruction shared strategies for and reflected on the challenges faced when developing embedded relationships with the disciplines in a conversation led by Iris Finkel (Hunter).

Robert Farrell led an “unconference” session that focused on using ACRL’s new Framework for Information Literacy to update existing IL lessons and create new learning opportunities to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge practices and dispositions outlined in the Framework.

Each session ran approximately 90 minutes to two hours. A detailed overview of the day’s workshops will be posted on LILAC’s website at: https://infolit.commons.gc.cuny.edu/.