Electronic Access to Resources (EAR) Committee Report

By Norman Buchwald (Chabot College) Committee Chair

Welcome to a new semester, everyone. The CCL-EAR Committee has already met on September 14 and 15 in Sacramento to discuss current electronic issues and trends, and to plan and begin work on new reviews.

New to the Committee are Nancy Gole from Merced College representing the East Central Region, Yvonne Reed from Victor Valley College representing the West Central Region, and Debra Moore from Contra Costa College representing the South Coast Region. We strongly welcome them to the group and look forward to their contributions.

Reviews on the horizon include a test preparation database comparison review, an aggregated ebooks comparison review, and individual product reviews on New York Times, EBSCO’s Curriculum Builder, and Noodle Tools. Later this Fall, we will be submitting a new survey to see what you would like reviewed for calendar year 2018.

Regarding statewide offers, I am sure you are aware that the CCL-Exec Board in cooperation with the California Community College Technology Center did put together a Statewide Database RFP Task Force and over the summer and early Fall of 2017, that Task Force did create and put out a new RFP and did look at submissions by vendors, and did interview and see demonstrations from the top three contenders. Based on that work, the intent from the Technology Center is to award the contract to EBSCO. After contract negotiations and Butte Community College District Board of Trustees approval, we should know more specifics by late October. The subscription is guaranteed for five years, from January 2018 to December 2022. Please do not confuse this announcement with the separate future RFP for a statewide ILS.

Once formally announced, CCL-EAR is planning to in some more proactive way keep you on top of what will be the statewide database package. As it will be the common feature all California Community college libraries will have, we hope to continue to see that its quality hopefully persists or even improves during our next five years with them. We still need to work out how that will be, so please take a look at our agendas and minutes of our future meetings.

Speaking of statewide subscriptions, I hope you caught the announcement last May that CountryWatch, now under new management, did come back to Council of Chief Librarians and have now stated clear intention to bring their product to WCAG 2.0 Accessiblity compliance within eighteen months. With this new change in intentions, the Exec Board reversed its earlier decision and have now approved a subscription renewal of the product which will happen in January, 2018. So in addition to the EBSCO database package, we will also have CountryWatch, which we hope are welcoming additions or continuations into your current college database suite.

Speaking of keeping any eye on vendors and trends, last May, the committee did learn about JSTOR’s new Topic Pages feature which includes Wikipedia articles serving as overviews on topic (subject) links students click on from search results. The Committee did contact the vendor and after the vendor chose to remove shorter entries of 150 characters or less and did say that they are also looking at alternatives, they are at this time featuring their Topic Pages which include a list of relevant entries from JSTOR with a Wikipedia article on top. The vendor has invited feedback from CCL-EAR and once they have stated how they would like us to participate we are certainly planning to provide additional feedback or testing they say they would like from us on the Topic Pages issue. If you have any concerns, in addition to contacting James Wisor or I, our JSTOR representative, Gregory Bodkin is available at gregory.bodkin@ithaka.org. Keep in mind that CCL-EAR has never asked for the removal of the Wikipedia articles and only expressed concern based on those voiced from teaching faculty.

Below is the schedule of the remaining CCL-EAR meetings for the rest of the academic year. We welcome anyone from a California Community College Library to be a guest to our meetings.

Telephone Conference October 27, 2017
Telephone Conference December 8, 2017
Telephone Conference January 26, 2018
Burbank Face-to-Face February 22-23, 2018
Telephone Conference April 27, 2018