Faculty Review of Open eTextbooks

The California Open Educational Resources Council has designed and implemented a faculty review process of the free and open etextbooks showcased within the California Open Online Library for Education (www.cool4ed.org). Faculty from the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California were invited to review the selected free and open etextboks using a rubric. Faculty received a stipend for their efforts and funding was provided by the State of California, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Textbook Name:

Writing Commons

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Find it: **eTextbook Website**

Textbook Author:
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Reviewed by:
Sabrina Nelson
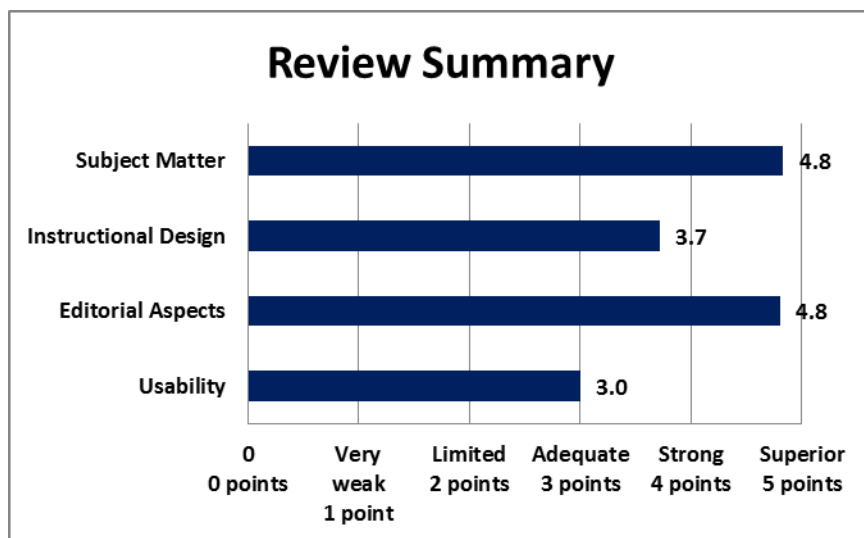
Institution:
Berkeley City College

Title/Position:
Professor

Format Reviewed:
Online

A small fee may be associated with various formats.

Review Summary

Subject Matter	4.8
Instructional Design	3.7
Editorial Aspects	4.8
Usability	3.0

Date Reviewed:
March 2015

California OER Council eTextbook Evaluation Rubric

CA Course ID: ENGL 105

Subject Matter (30 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the content accurate, error-free, and unbiased?						X
Does the text adequately cover the designated course with a sufficient degree of depth and scope?						X
Does the textbook use sufficient and relevant examples to present its subject matter?						X
Does the textbook use a clear, consistent terminology to present its subject matter?						X

	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Does the textbook reflect current knowledge of the subject matter?						X
Does the textbook present its subject matter in a culturally sensitive manner? (e.g. Is the textbook free of offensive and insensitive examples? Does it include examples that are inclusive of a variety of races, ethnicities, and backgrounds?)					X	

Total Points: 29 out of 30

Please provide comments on any aspect of the subject matter of this textbook:

- The subject matter is current, fresh and offered in an easy to read format. The videos are polished, entertaining and informative -- they are not offered in lieu of text but in support of text. The text and videos are easy to understand and engaging. The staff page provides the best example of cultural diversity on the site. On the home page there is also a link to the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives -- a well-built and culturally rich resource of narratives from real people from many cultures and walks of life.

Instructional Design (35 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Does the textbook present its subject materials at appropriate reading levels for undergrad use?						X
Does the textbook reflect a consideration of different learning styles? (e.g. visual, textual?)				X		
Does the textbook present explicit learning outcomes aligned with the course and curriculum?			X			
Is a coherent organization of the textbook evident to the reader/student?						X
Does the textbook reflect best practices in the instruction of the designated course?						X
Does the textbook contain sufficient effective ancillary materials? (e.g. test banks, individual and/or group activities or exercises, pedagogical apparatus, etc.)		X				
Is the textbook searchable?						X

Total Points: 26 out of 35

Please provide comments on any aspect of the instructional design of this textbook:

- The ancillary materials include extra readings on specific topics, and some videos. I didn't see any test banks or group activities. The text is a fully search-able website. Attention to learning styles is adequate and will appeal to readers as well as visual learners. There are no specific learning outcomes provided, yet they seem implicit in the design of each lecture.

Editorial Aspects (25 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
Is the language of the textbook free of grammatical, spelling, usage, and typographical errors?						X
Is the textbook written in a clear, engaging style?						X
Does the textbook adhere to effective principles of design? (e.g. are pages latid0out and organized to be clear and visually engaging and effective? Are colors, font, and typography consistent and unified?)						X
Does the textbook include conventional editorial features? (e.g. a table of contents, glossary, citations and further references)						X
How effective are multimedia elements of the textbook? (e.g. graphics, animations, audio)					X	

Total Points: 24 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- The organization of the text is very easy to follow and there are multiple ways to search and find a specific topic. The overall design and content are very easy to read and follow. It is sophisticated and polished. Each page is displayed with the reader in mind. The column is not too wide, and the navigation bar is easily found on the left as well as the top. There could be more images, but otherwise, it is pleasant to read and navigate.

Usability (30 possible points)	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)

Is the textbook compatible with standard and commonly available hardware/software in college/university campus student computer labs?					X	
Is the textbook accessible in a variety of different electronic formats? (e.g. .txt, .pdf, .epub, etc.)					X	
Can the textbook be printed easily?		X				
Does the user interface implicitly inform the reader how to interact with and navigate the textbook?						X
How easily can the textbook be annotated by students and instructors?		X				

Total Points: 15 out of 30

Please provide comments on any aspect of access concerning this textbook.

- The book works best on a computer, laptop or larger tablet like an iPad. The layout is adjustable and may work on a smaller tablet or smart phone. The only format available seems to be web page. A few pages could be printed but it would be cumbersome to try and print the entire site. There are transcripts for the videos, but overall, the site isn't really designed for printing. The user interface has a navigational bar on the left that is extremely helpful and there is also a nav bar on top. For annotation, a user could print a page and handwrite annotations, or save the text from a page into a word processor and add their own notes that way. If I were to use the text, I would encourage students to install Evernote and use its web-clipping feature for more thorough annotation.

Overall Ratings						
	Not at all (0 pts)	Very Weak (1 pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3 pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
What is your overall impression of the textbook?						X
	Not at all (0 pts)	Strong reservations (1 pt)	Limited willingness (2 pts)	Willing (3 pts)	Strongly willing (4 pts)	Enthusiastically willing (5 pts)
How willing would you be to adopt this book?						X

Total Points: 10 out of 10

Overall Comments

If you were to recommend this textbook to colleagues, what merits of the textbook would you highlight?

- Simple and elegant design. Updated and modern content that meets young people "where they live" by providing entire chapters on effective information literacy and writing for new media.

What areas of this textbook require improvement in order for it to be used in your courses?

- A more interactive, visually informed style would strengthen this book, as would more relevant links/resources. Framing the text in terms of rhetorical situation and/or genre instead of modes of writing would also update the books significantly.

> We invite you to add your feedback on the textbook or the review to the textbook site in MERLOT
> (Please register in MERLOT to post your feedback.)

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For questions or more information, contact the CA Open Educational Resources Council.