As coordinator of the Cerro Author visits, I have a litany of worries:

- Will the author relate to our students?
- Will the author have some irritating tic?
- Will this year’s author be as amazing as the other Cerro Authors?
- Will anyone come?

I needn’t have worried about Patricia McCormick on any count. With no irritating tics, Patty addressed our students with passion about the subjects of her books, and the students responded in kind. In all three sessions, the Fireside Room was filled with students eager to ask relevant questions about Patty’s books, her motivation for writing, and her creative process. Of her visit to BC, Patty wrote, “Your students were amazing: their questions were profound and meaningful, delightful and probing. In fact, they made me think in ways I hadn’t been asked to do before.” So, not only was Patricia McCormick as amazing as the other Cerro Authors, she found our students to be amazing too.

The success of this program depends on faculty and staff, who encourage students to read and then come to meet the authors. Every year, the librarians pinch themselves when students respond so positively—hanging on the author’s every word, asking great questions, standing in line to have their books signed, having their pictures taken with the author. So, to those of you who assigned Patty’s books, thank you. And to those of you who did not, think about it for next year.

Recently, the library acquired An Archive of Hope: Harvey Milk’s Speeches and Writings. While its contents focus on gay rights, one press release captured the librarians’ attention. In 1974, he wrote about the vital role libraries play in communities. In comparing the library to other centers of culture, he calls the library a place where one witnesses “a different sort of performance... held daily from nine in the morning until nine at night. There are no stars and there is no music. The attendees are not the affluent... though culture is high on the agenda. The patrons include both the poor and the rich, the students and the entertainment-starved, the blue collar and the executive, the very young and the very old. The performances are held in silence and the performers are tiny black figures on white pages. There is no charge; it is free to all... [The library] gets neither publicity nor applause, even though it serves in silence the needs of all and asks no price for services rendered. It provides fantasies for the young, solace for the old, and information for all who seek it.” He believed the library represents a city’s” heart,” just as we believe the Grace Van Dyke Bird Library is the heart of Bakersfield College.

For years, many faculty members have bemoaned the fact that the library did not subscribe to JSTOR, a non-profit database that provides full text access to many scholarly journals. Well, the moaning can stop. Last year, due to some positive changes in state funding (imagine!), the library could finally afford JSTOR.
But JSTOR has many configurations, so we conferred with faculty and selected Arts & Sciences VII collection for our students. Here is JSTOR’s description of the collection:
The Arts & Sciences VII Collection includes more journals in more disciplines than any other JSTOR collection. Its eclectic range of disciplines in the arts, humanities, and social sciences complements research in core disciplines such as history, political science, sociology, art and art history, and language and literature, and the collection represents the largest cluster of health policy titles in JSTOR. Arts & Sciences VII also has the largest collection of international titles with over 15 countries represented. It’s possible that this isn’t the collection you might have known and loved at another college or university, but it does provide a wealth of resources not previously available to our students and faculty. As I write this, JSTOR is beta testing a new search interface, so perhaps the words that follow will be outdated. I hope so. But, as it stands now, JSTOR is not as easy to search as our other subscription databases. The only effective way to search the database is using a full text search. A search of abstract terms is available, but only 10% of the articles have abstracts, so that isn’t a good option. So inexperienced researchers may end up with a pile of irrelevant results; heck, even experienced researchers will!

Selected New Books in the General Collection (in call number order)

History


The New ebook Collection

It is with trepidation that I announce this amazing fact: the library now has more ebooks than it has print books. We have had ebooks for some time; over 11,000 have been accessible through our catalog for several years. We actually “own” these virtual books—although we share them with several other colleges. As in the past, you can find these ebooks during a normal search in the catalog.

Now, we have access to another collection—of over 120,000 titles. These are titles we subscribe to rather than own. That distinction may not seem important, but it is: it changes the way you search for them. This collection can only be accessed through the ebook collections link on the library home page or through selecting the ebook collections in an EBSCOhost search. So—to do a thorough search for book resources, a researcher must now conduct 2 searches, one in the library catalog and another from the ebook collections link or in EBSCOhost (the company that provides our ebook services).

For those of us who harbor Luddite tendencies, perusing an online book is not a joy. However, more than doubling our collection is a joy—even for a Luddite. The library could never have afforded to add over 120,000 new print books to the collection. And while the ebooks don’t smell of paper and ink, researchers can do a full text search of the contents, which outshines even the best index in its thoroughness. And researchers can print pages from the books—usually up to 60; the pages are usually in PDF, so they read just like a book.

So spread the word. The collection contains many quite scholarly titles and includes some reference sources as well. But Luddites should not despair: the library is still buying books in print, as even our tech-savvy students still prefer a “real” book to a virtual one.

Since the Bird’s Eye View was on hiatus last year, a big backlog of new books is straining the space restrictions of the newsletter. So, this issue will focus on just a few subjects, with more to come in the next issues!


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