Not Your Mother’s Library

The QCC Library is a very busy place. Once in a while I stop and reflect on the difference between what actually goes on at our library and what we, as librarians, had previously thought we would do when we became academic librarians. In this newsletter, you will read about new artwork in the library, open access, embedded librarians, assessment, and many other things that are going on in our library, which is “not your mother’s library”! Our focus is on service; content is more important than format, and we know that change is a fact of life.

Our gate counts range between 3000 and 5000 Monday through Thursday. We want to remind everyone that we are now open at 7:30 a.m. on weekdays. We also have Sunday hours, from 10 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. If our users cannot come in, they can still use our e-books (one third of our book collection), online periodicals, and even online films and music in our databases. You can chat with a librarian online, and we intend to expand the hours that this service is available.

Some acknowledgements are in order. Thanks to Barnes & Noble, Academic Affairs, CUNY Central, and the Academic Computing Center (ACC), we have budgets that allow us to maintain our collection of textbooks, other books, and databases. We appreciate CETL and ACC’s help in loaning computer classrooms to accommodate our record number of information literacy instruction sessions. Finally, in addition to our outstanding full-time faculty members and staff, we have been able to add some new part-time people. New adjunct CLTs include Eric Zhong and Compton Boodhoo. Two college assistants, Michele Naranjo and Kristi Giacolone, have also joined our department.

The Library wishes the whole QCC community a productive end of semester!

~Prof. Jeanne Galvin
Chief Librarian
New Twists to Old Concept—Embedded Librarianship

Embedded Librarianship has been around for a length of time. All academic librarians have been an embedded librarian at one time or another. Whether it is as a librarian liaison to an academic department, working with special programs as Service Learning, Honors Program, e-learning, etc., or when we are teaching an information literacy class, the goal is to make a bonding partnership with students and classroom teaching faculty. This consociate includes availability, information sharing, mentoring of students, and developing a collaboration with classroom teaching faculty within a framework of shared mutual interests and goals.

As with all ideas and concepts, the time for embedded librarianship has come, again. An e-mail was sent to all faculty from Prof. Devin McKay, the Library’s Faculty Outreach Librarian, in early June with the following information:

**Embedded Librarian Program**

- **Purpose:** An embedded librarian will be assigned to students throughout the semester for Faculty who will be assigning numerous writing, or project/group oriented research assignments for their courses.

- **Requirements:** Students will attend a Library information literacy class or classes over the course of the semester. Dates will be determined at the time of class scheduling. Two sessions are recommended.

- **Embedded Librarian Availability:** All students will receive the name, e-mail address, and telephone number of their embedded librarian, via blackboard, etc. Students will meet their embedded librarian during the first Library information literacy session. Students will be able to make appointments with the librarian for one-on-one sessions.

An overview of research services for students to achieve research competency was also included.

The results so far:

- **Participants:** 11 faculty members (these faculty chose two or three Library sessions for a total of 63 classes)
- **Academic Departments Participating:** Academic Literacy, English, and Speech Communication & Theatre Arts
- **Student Responses:** No exact count is being kept, but quite a number of students are coming to the Library requesting their embedded librarian by name. This has been positive and encouraging feedback.

As this is just the first semester of the “official” embedded librarian program linked specifically with the information literacy classes, a review in January will provide us with best practices and pitfalls. To be continued. . .

~SUZI SCIAMMARELLA
Coordinator of Public Services and Information Literacy Programs
A ROOM FOR TWO

To this world I am committed
Crisp white jacket tightly fitted
Walls of down bring no frown
Head pressed against to hear no sound
A light to stay keeps shadows at bay
Dare not complain
Three meals a day
Then the rest is time for play!
Oh what a great hotel!
Casting pressed powder spells—
To give my life such joy!
To have my choice of ho-hum toy
Only to share with my lightless friend—
To stand with me until the end—

~C.B. DICKINSON

Influenced by classic literature, C.B. Dickinson works as a plumber/electrician in Queens and uses his spare time to write poetry and children’s books as well as short stories. His favorite writers include Edgar Allen Poe, Emily Dickinson, The Brothers Grimm, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. He is currently working on a children’s story and a series of young adult short stories through his independent study at QCC.

You can also listen to the audio on Soundcloud.

Student Voices

The Library initiated a student poetry contest for its newsletter in spring 2013, and this issue’s poem is the second winner. Congratulations to C.B. Dickinson!

Beginning in 2014, the contest will be held annually each spring with the winner appearing in the spring newsletter. Watch for our announcement in early February with the next deadline for submissions.

Special thanks to Prof. Tammi Rothman and Marcia Suarez for serving on the selection committee and to Prof. Jodie Childers for her support in launching this new feature.

Our reader for Dickinson’s poem is Jena Morales. To listen to Jena’s reading, click on the play button below the poem.

Don’t Miss the 2014 QCC Common Read

This year’s Common Read title is The Road of Lost Innocence by Somaly Mam. Publisher’s Weekly describes the autobiography this way: “The horror and violence perpetrated on young girls to feed the sex trade industry in southeast Asia is personalized in this graphic story. Of mixed race, Khmer and Phnong, Mam is living on her own in the forest in northern Cambodia around 1980 when a 55-year-old stranger claims he will take her to her missing family. ‘Grandfather’ beats and abuses the nine-year-old Mam and sells her virginity to a Chinese merchant to cover a gambling debt. She is subsequently sold into a brothel in Phnom Penh. . . . [Mam] manages to break the cycle only when she discovers the advantages of ferengi (foreign) clients and eventually marries a Frenchman. She comes back to Cambodia from France. . . . and fearlessly devotes herself to helping prostitutes and exploited children. . . . This moving, disturbing tale is not one of redemption but a cry for justice and support for women’s plight everywhere.”

Approximately 40 classes will participate in the Common Read, with The Road of Lost Innocence in integrated in spring syllabi and assignments. Many participating faculty will combine this high impact practice (the Common Read falls under Common Intellectual Experience) with others, such as service learning or collaborative activities and projects (SWIG). Participating faculty and students receive free copies of the book.

Also mark your calendars for Common Read events being held during the three weeks of March 17 through April 4, 2014; specific details will be available on the QCC website. If you’re interested in participating or would like additional information, contact coordinator Susan Madera. For additional information and resources about the book and its author, visit the Library’s research guide: http://qcc.libguides.com/lostinnocence.
Assessment of the Kurt R. Schmeller Library’s Reference Desk Services

After attending the excellent Assessment Institute conducted by Dr. Arthur Corradetti and Dr. Ian Beckford, Profs. Sheila Beck, Barbara Bonous-Smit, and Neera Mohess (the Library’s assessment team) decided to assess the Reference Desk Services of the Library. In surveying the literature on assessment of library reference services, the team found that several studies devoted to this topic have been conducted. Some of the earliest research dates back to the early 1960s and 1970s. But there were some gaps when it came to assessment of library reference services. Under the guidance of Dr. Beckford and Dr. Corradetti, the team first conducted a needs assessment in order to determine the necessity for the project. According to a handout from Dr. Beckford:

A needs assessment is the process of obtaining and analyzing information to determine the current status and service needs of a defined population and/or geographic area. Needs assessments can be useful for:

1. Obtaining information about current conditions in a defined population, including problems or service needs and the resources and approaches being used to address them.
2. Determining met and unmet service needs among specific target populations and for the overall service area or community.

The Library’s assessment team found that evaluation of the Reference Desk Services was needed. The goal of the assessment was to ensure that all Library patrons using the Reference Desk received the help they needed, whether it is help with their course assignments, finding a book, using databases, citation help, or anything else. According to Carolyn W. Jardine: “Patrons will judge the service they receive not only on whether or not they get what they came in for, but also on the reference librarian’s attitude, behavior, interest, and enthusiasm.” (College & Research Libraries 56.6 (Nov. 1995): 477)

For an assessment instrument, the team designed a user satisfaction survey to evaluate the behavior performance of the Library’s Reference Desk Library faculty. The questions were based on the Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers, from the American Library Association (ALA) Reference and User Services Association (RUSA). These guidelines outline professional behavior in reference and information services, detailing the importance of the following: approachability, interest, listening/inquiring, searching, and follow-up.

Focus groups were used to test, evaluate, and critique the survey. Based on the evaluation from the focus groups, the survey was revised. A pilot study was conducted during the summer of 2013 and the assessment will continue through the Spring semester of 2014. The data will be analyzed and a report will be issued. There will also be discussions about the survey results with the Library faculty and if needed, workshops will be offered.

The team has received invitations to present their study at conferences. This project also sparked the creation of a Reference Desk Policy and Procedure Manual. Although there were policies and procedures in place, they were never in writing.

Many thanks also to all who have helped us with this project. Thanks to Denis Bejar and especially Bing-Chuan Chiu of the Academic Computing Center for helping us with the online version of the survey. It is available on the Library’s homepage or at http://bit.ly/referencesurvey.

~Barbara Bonous-Smit, Sheila Beck & Neera Mohess

Research to Live by: Ambient Sounds Increase Creativity

A recent research article, “Is Noise Always Bad?”, details findings from five experiments and concludes that moderate ambient sounds boost creativity. We hear from some students that the Library’s 3rd floor is too noisy; for others, it may be just the right ambient sound for completing assignments and projects that require creativity. If your environment is lacking sound, try Coffitivity, an online site with apps that provides coffee shop sounds to work by.
SUN 365: Art by Prof. Tony Monahan

This fall Tony Monahan, artist and Assistant Professor in Health, Physical Education, and Dance, donated his artwork, SUN 365, to The Kurt R. Schmeller Library. We invite you to stop by and see his beautiful piece (turn right after you enter and go past the copiers). We are very grateful for Prof. Monahan’s generosity and would also like to thank Cristina DiMeo who was instrumental in connecting us with Prof. Monahan making this donation possible.

The following interview with Prof. Monahan was conducted by Prof. Jean Amaral, Emerging Technologies Librarian. You can listen to the full interview on Soundcloud.

Q: Can you tell us a little about how SUN 365 came to be?

I got the idea because I was living overseas for awhile; I was in the Caribbean for a little bit, then I went to South America to Brazil, and then I moved to California, to Berkeley, which was a very diverse city. I was enthralled with the whole aspect of diversity. And I took an interest in the languages and had an idea of gathering these languages and putting together this art piece.

I had a few other things in mind, but this was the one that was a universal symbol, the sun, and a lot of other cultures don’t have universal symbols for other things—maybe the moon—but something like earth, a lot of cultures don’t have a word for earth, like all the aboriginals, they don’t even have a concept for earth, they just have a word like land. So it’s hard to do something like that, for the whole world. Sun was probably the easiest thing.

So I started the project, and I started doing research and traveling around the country to different libraries and different colleges and institutions and so forth, gathering my words—two years worth of research.

Q: And when you went to a library what were you doing in terms of the research?

I had specific things I was looking for when I went to a particular library. For example, at San Francisco Public Library, I was looking for Native American languages because they had a large collection. When I went to the Library of Congress in Washington, I was just looking for the Australian languages, the aboriginal languages. Los Angeles library was fabulous; they had a whole floor dedicated to languages, so I spent a lot of time there. So I pretty much had a plan when I went to the bigger libraries. I went to some smaller libraries in New England that had some of the local languages, local Native American languages, which was fun as well.

Q: So in terms of the colors for SUN 365, how did you decide?

The art is fashioned after my favorite artist, Renee Magritte, and Magritte tends to put things out of perspective—he’ll put an apple in front of some one’s face or a big giant boulder inside a building or a room—so I put the sun in front of the clouds and the sky in honor of him. So that was the idea, to emulate my favorite artist.

Q: And the colors that you chose for the words, was there any reason for those?

I had a conversation with a linguistics professor at UC Berkeley, and languages are not categorized that way, but I figured the average person like myself would not really understand all the different families of languages. So I listed them by geographic area and kind of randomly chose the colors for the languages, and I wanted to do it by Europe, Asia, North America, South America, Australia, South Pacific, and so forth. I also chose some pidgin and creole languages and a few dead languages, like hieroglyphics and Mayan. I wanted to throw in some things that were representations of the word as well, Egyptian hieroglyphic, Mayan hieroglyphic, Viking rune. That made it more interesting.

Q: How did you choose the 365 languages?

I actually got more, over 400, so I tried to balance things out. There were lots of African languages, and I had to cut back on some. Bantu, there’s like a hundred Bantu languages alone. So I tried to just even out the

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categories. And there were certain words that were the same word in many many languages. I took some of the main or the bigger languages and represented with the same word.

**Q: Any interesting stories from your travels?**

Yes, I have lots of interesting stories! I actually want to give acknowledgment to Lily Quach. . . . She's in Berkeley and she grew up during the Vietnamese War. And they were refugees for a little while escaping the war. She grew up as a very skittish and shy person and she relied on artwork. So she worked very hard on art and became a very successful graphic artist. She helped me on this piece laying in the words.

And I've got one really wonderful story. . . . I was looking for one particular language that I had a photocopy of; it was a fuzzy photocopy so I couldn't make out exactly what it was, and I had to hand draw all the symbolic languages that weren't on the computer. The language was Pashto.

So I went to UC Berkeley. . . . I had a two-hour break and it was a hot day and I parked my car several blocks away. UC Berkeley didn't have any English to Pashto dictionaries, only Pashto to English, so it was like a needle in a haystack. I'm looking through these books saying I don't even know how to begin looking for this. But after two hours, I found one sentence that said, “If I hold my thumb up to the air I can block out the sun.”

So I made a quick photocopy of that.

I had to run back to my car to go back to work. And I was sweating and I was hot, so I stopped to get something to drink. I went to this 7-11 down the street, and I'm waiting in line. I've got my drink in my hand, and I'm looking at the guy behind the counter. When it was my turn to pay, I just looked at him and I said, “Where you from?” And he said, “I am from Afghanistan.” I said, “Do you speak Pashto?” He says, “It’s my language!” So I say, “Just one minute.” I run out to my car, I get the paper and ask “Can you read this sentence, if I hold my thumb up to the . . .” I’ve got my index card and my sharpie and I say, “Could you write the word?” So he wrote the word. I tried to get his name, and he's like “No no no, it’s okay, come back and talk to me.”

I went back several times, and I never saw him again. That word in Pashto on SUN 365 is from his hands, and where else, other than New York, where else but Berkeley, California. That was serendipity. . . . And that was the one language that I needed, that was the one that I was looking for to give to Lily the next day.

**Q: What is art in your life?**

Art is the great balancing factor for me. I like to be creative. I separate the work I do here at school and the work I do on my own. If I have schoolwork, I will do it in my office all hours of the night; I usually don’t take it home with me. When I go home, I have a whole other profession to do.

I do artwork pretty much every day. My art takes a long time to do. I average three pieces a year, so I have to work very hard on it just to keep up with the three pieces a year. It balances my life, and it relieves the stress for me, and it gets me to focus on different things at different times of the day. A lot of times just doing it, my hands just start working without me even thinking about it.

**Q: And what do you think about art in the life of a community or an organization like QCC? Where does art fit?**

I think art enhances any community, and I think that the more art we see on the wall the better we feel. It’s extremely informational; most art is informational. You can look at things like SUN 365—I meant it to be something that was universally understood, but also when you see it, it teaches you something every single time and you learn something new.

I think art is very important, and I think that especially at a place like here at Queensborough, such a diverse campus, I think the art is wonderful to see, especially in our gallery . . . and we need more of it.
John Harbison: A Major American Composer and His Music

Thanks to a PSC-CUNY grant, I will be able to complete my book on the life and music of the prominent American composer, John Harbison. The book presents a detailed biography covering his life up to 2013, a discussion of his works, and performances and recordings of his music up to 2012. It includes analysis of his music by the author along with comments by the composer, performers, and others associated with his music. This book will be the first to systematically study all of his published and unpublished music and to present a detailed retrospective on his life. Various sources are used in the book including interviews and correspondences with the composer, performers, and others associated with his life and music. Information from program notes and press reviews are also included. It also further establishes John Harbison’s stature as a major American composer.

A prolific and eclectic composer, Harbison has composed numerous works including symphonies, operas, concerti, instrumental solo compositions, works for large and small ensembles, choral, vocal and chamber music. He is not afraid to mix classical and contemporary compositional techniques with jazz and popular music. Many honors have been bestowed on him including the commissions for the 50th Anniversary of the State of Israel and to honor Pope Paul II. His works have been performed to critical acclaim in major concert halls around the world and he is the recipient of many prestigious awards. The list is long and includes: the Kennedy Center Friedheim Award, the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, the Pulitzer Prize for Music, a MacArthur Fellowship, the 30th Lancaster Symphony Composer Award, the Heinz Foundation Award, the American Music Center’s Letters of Distinction, the Harvard Arts Medal, the American Composers Orchestra Distinguished Composer Award, the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Mark M. Horblit “Merit Award” for distinguished composition by an American composer, among others. Harbison has also been awarded Honorary Doctorate degrees in Music from Indiana State University, the New England Conservatory of Music, Brown University, and the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

This project certainly was very valuable for me, and I am very happy to complete it. Working with the composer on his biography, studying and analyzing his many scores, receiving comments from performers and others associated with his life and music, and combing through the databases for reviews and other information on his life and music have been rewarding. I received free tickets from the composer to some performances of his works and doors were opened for me to attend dress rehearsals. Although the project was a lot of work for me, I really enjoyed working on it and appreciate receiving the PSC-CUNY grant to help complete it.

~Barbara Bonous-Smit

21st Century Information Needs and Seeking

This fall and spring faculty and students have the opportunity to participate in a PSC-CUNY-funded ethnographic study designed to investigate information needs and information seeking at community colleges. The research questions that I will address in this project include:

- What information needs do community college students have in the 21st century?
- How do community college students seek information in relation to these needs? What is the library's role in meeting these information needs?
- What information needs do community college faculty have in relation to their research agendas and teaching?
- How do community college faculty seek information in relation to these needs? What is the library's role in meeting these information needs?

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It has been decades since the golden age of the pulp magazine. Pulp magazines were rapidly produced, cheap, and sensational. They used to fill the newsstands and magazine racks at five-and-dime stores and at pharmacies in the 1950s. The stories were fantastical, sometimes lurid, and formulaic. The magazines themselves provided opportunities for burgeoning writers to develop narratives and style. Writers Ray Bradbury, Jim Thompson, and Donald Westlake, now famous masters of their genres, began writing in places such as Black Mask, Thrilling Detective, and Tales of Suspense.

Since the evolution of the Web, pulp fiction magazines have been revived. Only this time, the magazines are in digital format. This was the crux and subject of my presentation at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom, in September. The conference, Crime Fiction: Retold, Resold, and Transformed, was diverse in its offering of topics, ideas, and explorations of the crime genre as a legitimate discipline, vital to the in-depth and intellectual study of literature. The conference was geographically diverse, with participating scholars from Czech Republic; Hungary; Buffalo, New York; Greece; and Italy, among other locations.

The migration of pulp magazines from print to online e-zines was the subject of my presentation. Just like famous writers began their career in small magazines, so many new crime authors are beginning to use the Web as a key venue for breaking into the literary business. E-zines are beneficial in many ways for the writer and reader. They are easily accessible, many are free, and they have diverse offerings. They also reach more of an audience than just a handful of print subscribers in a niche market. I have published several fiction stories in e-zines like Beat to a Pulp, Pulp Metal, and Twist of Noir. What was particularly exciting about my research is the revelation that there was a large amount of opportunity for new and struggling writers. Not to mention, the very shape of narrative and subject matter of crime fiction is being reconfigured for this new medium, and the possibilities are endless.

At the conference, there were several prominent crime fiction authors and many fascinating studies of crime fiction interpreted in scholarly and intellectual frameworks. I learned a great deal about the cultural impact of this fiction that has been represented by many regions of the world, with each geographic location generating their own unique brand of crime fiction. My studies of pulp and e-zines provided a new perspective as author, scholar, and librarian. Librarianship and writing go hand and hand, and the opportunity to study alongside many other scholars in the field of genre fiction has enhanced my understanding of readers and the texts made available to them via online access.

~Bill Blick

The study will explore these topics from a broader perspective than most other research in this area, which has generally focused on research paper assignments from the perspective of students and occasionally faculty. The nature and focus of some college research assignments is changing, and we want to be sure we’re taking this into account as we plan library services. For example, there is a growing emphasis at QCC on AAC&U’s high-impact practices which often use non-traditional assignments such as digital storytelling and videography among other formats, rather than the traditional research paper drawing primarily on secondary and tertiary sources.

Three protocols will be used to gather data which will be triangulated. Protocols include questionnaires, information journals, and personal learning environment video interviews. Students and faculty received questionnaires in November, which will run through mid-December. If you haven’t yet completed the questionnaire, there’s still time! And look for announcements in January about the opportunity to participate in the information journals and video interviews.

Thanks to everyone who has completed the questionnaire to date. I look forward to reporting on the initial questionnaire results in the spring Library newsletter.

~Jean Amaral

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New CUNY-wide Fines and Fees for Libraries

It was Fall 1994, when the CUNY Board of Trustees issued a statement providing the fines and fees for all CUNY Libraries. Approximately twenty years later, the CUNY Board of Trustees has issued another statement of new fines and fees. Most of these increases relate to our Libraries. Please note the following:

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<td>Overdue Books (Stacks)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overdue Books (Reserve)</td>
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<td>Overdue DVDs, VHS, CDs (Reserve)</td>
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<td>Other Equipment (Reserve)</td>
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NEW FEES

- **Damaged Books**: Charges will be the amount determined by the extent of damage, plus $25.00 processing fee, and overdue fines up to the date the item is reported as being damaged.
- **Damaged Articles**: $.10 per page for photocopied articles, plus a processing fee; the fee is equal to the replacement cost and overdue fines;
- **Lost Items**: Charges will be the current price of the item, plus $25.00 processing fee and overdue fines; if the current price of the item cannot be determined, the original cost plus an inflationary rate shall be substituted.

Increases have been necessary due to several factors. Some patrons have abused the time allowed for Reserve and circulating items. It is hoped that the increase in fees and fines discourages patrons from keeping items out and preventing others the opportunity to use much needed library materials.

If further discussion of the new fines and fees are needed, feel free to stop by the Check Out desk on the second floor of the Library and additional explanations of charges will be provided. You can also call the Library at 718 631-6227 or email us at askref@qcc.cuny.edu.

~CONNIE WILLIAMS, CIRCULATION COORDINATOR
New Books: QCC Library Quick Picks

The QCC library has purchased many new book titles on the cutting edge of both thought-provoking creative writing, and challenging explorations of the social sciences and cultural studies by practitioners and scholars of these disciplines.

One title that is worthy of particular note is the follow-up book to *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert, *The Signature of All Things*. This novel is a period-piece set in the 19th century, and follows the fortune of the Whittaker Family. The clan is led by Henry, an enterprising and unique character who makes a great fortune in the South American quinine trade, eventually becoming the richest man in Philadelphia. It pays homage to 19th century novels and is surely an engaging read.

Another book by noted journalist and film critic, James Agee, best known for *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, has also made its debut in our stacks. It is called *Cotton Tenants* and was pieced together from Agee’s notes after his death. The book is a staggering appeal to help the impoverished in this country.

Thirdly, in “The End of the Suburbs,” journalist, Leigh Gallagher, traces the rise and fall of American suburbia from the stately railroad suburbs that sprung up outside American cities in the 19th and early 20th centuries to current-day sprawling exurbs where residents spend as much as four hours each day commuting. Along the way she shows why suburbia was unsustainable from the start and explores the hundreds of new, alternative communities that are springing up around the country and promise to reshape our way of life for the better.” (Amazon.com). This is a unique and timely piece, and adds to a vast tradition of cultural criticism.

The final book of note for this article is Jonathan Lethem’s *Dissident Gardens*. The critics explain: “Claiming to have lost my reviewer’s copy of Jonathan Lethem’s *Dissident Gardens*, I asked his publicist at Doubleday to send a couple more galleys my way... I wanted the additional copies so I could press them into the hands of close family and dear friends, telling them as I did so: ‘Here, read the year’s best novel.’” (Alexander Nazaryan for *The New Republic* – from Amazon.com).

Lethem’s “dazzling” novel focuses on three generations of American radicals. Thought provoking and informative, Lethem’s writing generates both identification and alienation in readers. In the end, what the reader is left with are a series of conundrums to be puzzled over.

Happy Reading!

~Bill Blick

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The Customizable Library

At the November 13th eLearning Institute Luncheon, Prof. Jean Amaral, Emerging Technologies Librarian and liaison to QCC’s online (PNET and FNET) courses, gave a presentation about what the Library is doing for online faculty and students, as well as what we’d like to be doing. Jean recorded a video recreation of that talk.

Clicking on the image to the left will launch the video on YouTube. You can also visit the Customizable Library website created for the presentation. Feel free to get in touch if you’d like targeted online library instructional materials created for your students.
The Windhover

To Christ our Lord

I caught this morning morning’s minion, king-
dom of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimbling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate’s heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

~Gerard Manley Hopkins

To learn more about this poem, visit the Poetry Foundation Learning Guide.

My Favorite Poem

My favourite poem is a sonnet by Gerard Manley Hopkins entitled “The Windhover.”

This poem is appealing on many levels. The imagery is dramatic and filled with movement. The way the lines are arranged on the page invite speaking the poem aloud and there is a musical quality to the words. The poet appears to be humbled by the way the bird is able to navigate the wind and the air. Hopkins, who became a Jesuit priest, dedicated the poem to “Christ Our Lord” and the poem is indeed a strongly descriptive statement of nature’s power.

I love this poem because reading it aloud reminds me of when I read Dr. Seuss to my children! The bird imagery is so alive, rich, and pleasurable to say. I have even called my parrot a “dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon,” and, as an owner of multiple birds, I always relate how my “heart in hiding / Stirred for a bird.”

Toward the end of the poem the imagery becomes dark, and, at the same time, paints contradictory pictures in light. “Shine, and blue-bleak embers” – falling and gashing pull the reader in opposing directions and in the end, it seems that new almost blinding, light appears—in gold and vermilion.

Since the poem is dedicated to Christ, I would imagine that the poet is revealing his own spiritual journey and his own re-birth into life as a Jesuit priest. While the poem is only fourteen lines, there is so much power and feeling that every time I re-read it, I am caught up in its intensity again.

~Devin McKay