

# NEWS FROM OWEN LIBRARY

Vol. 1, No. 2

Spring 2009

## Inside this issue:

- Check It Out @ Owen Library 2
- Spring Term Open Sessions 2
- Creating Effective Research Library Assignments 3
- Introducing PITTCat+ 3
- Faculty Spotlight on Faculty/Librarian Collaboration 4

## Farewell and Best Wishes

Beginning this Spring semester, there will be one less familiar face around the Library.

Laura Bowers, who has been at UPJ for over three years, will leave Owen Library to begin student teaching at Conemaugh Township. Laura has worked at Owen Library while completing her teaching certificate. Her interests lie in increasing student literacy and reading comprehension, and she plans to teach middle or high school English.



While at Owen, Laura has served as Circulation Coordinator, a position that has included coordinating Course Reserves. Please join the staff of Owen Library in wishing Laura the best of luck as she begins this new chapter in her life. We'll miss her!

Please note: Faculty wishing to utilize Course Reserves now can direct inquiries to **David Kupas, Access Services Librarian**, at x 1983 or [dmk24@pitt.edu](mailto:dmk24@pitt.edu).

## NEW ELECTRONIC RESOURCES: A SELECTED LIST

The following is a selected list of new or upgraded databases available through the ULS Digital Library. Databases are accessible through the Library's "Databases A to Z" unless otherwise noted. Upgrades to existing databases are also noted.

### *Academic OneFile*

The ULS has upgraded the Expanded Academic ASAP subscription to Academic OneFile. Academic OneFile has more content; most notably more peer reviewed journals.

### *The Conference Board Database*

The Conference Board is a not-for-profit organization that creates and disseminates knowledge about management and the marketplace to help businesses strengthen their performance and better serve society.

### *International Relations and Security Network*

ISN is the world's foremost open access information service for international relations and security professionals.

### *Points of View Reference Center*

Points of View is designed to assist researchers in understanding the full scope of controversial subjects.

## Did you know.....

The UPJ Library was first housed in North Hall — what is now Krebs Hall.



## Check It Out @ Owen Library: “Ask a Librarian” Instant Messaging Service

If you're struggling with an assignment or a research question (large or small), we've got you covered. Pitt-Johnstown librarians are available to answer questions in person at Owen Library, on the phone by calling 269-7295, or via email. From the Owen Library home page (<http://library.pitt.edu/john/owen.html>, click “Departments & Services” then “Reference Service” and choose the “Ask-a-Librarian at Johnstown” link to fill out a brief form).

But wait, there's yet *another* way you can contact us: through instant messaging (IM)! IM is perfect for those days you just don't feel like trekking to the library and your question is a rather simple one. Pitt's IM reference service is available two ways. If you already have an account through an IM service such as AOL, Yahoo!, MSN, or Gtalk, just add **ASKaPITLibrarian** to your buddy list. If you see us online, fire away. If you don't have an IM account, or you're unable to log on, you can still ask questions via instant messaging using the **IMaPITLibrarian** widgit on our web site. Follow the directions to the Ask-a-Librarian at Johnstown page, as listed above, or head straight to <http://www.library.pitt.edu/john/ask.html>. If the widgit shows a librarian as being online, you're free to enter your question into the text box. The widgit can be used on any computer with an Internet connection.

IM hours of coverage vary, but the service is usually available 8:30 am-9:00 pm Monday-Friday; 9:30 am-5:00pm Saturday; and noon-9:00 pm Sunday. This service is open to anyone affiliated with the University of Pittsburgh, or those with questions about Pitt resources and services. Questions are answered on a first-come, first-serve basis. If a librarian isn't available to answer your question, please contact us through one of the other ways previously mentioned. §

→ Looking for ways to improve your research skills?

→ Wondering how to get ahead in class or at work?

Then check out...

### Owen Library Open Sessions

In each session, you'll learn tricks and tips for making the research process easier and more effective.

## Open Sessions Announced for Spring Term

*Finding a Needle in a Haystack: Tips for Effective Internet Research*

Owen Rm. 209

February 10, 18, and 26, 2009

*Become a Savvy Scholar: Distinguishing Between Primary and Secondary Sources*

Owen Rm. 209

February 11, 19, and 25, 2009

*Citations Made Easy*

Owen Rm. 210

March 17, 26, and April 1, 2009

*Understanding Plagiarism: What You Need to Know*

Owen Rm. 210

March 19, 25, and 31, 2009

Everyone is welcome, but seating is limited, so please **sign-up** at least 1 week in advance. We'll have completion certificates available for students attending as homework or for extra credit for class. Sessions are approximately 1 hour duration.

**Sign up by calling Melissa Mallon at x7287 or stopping by Owen Library's Circulation Desk!**



# Creating Effective Research Assignments

Ahh, the infamous research project: most professors assign them, and most students dread them. They can be frustrating and confusing for students who aren't comfortable with library research, and equally frustrating for faculty members when it comes to quality of student work and the time-consuming grading process. But it doesn't have to be this way! By working with librarians to develop assignments that strengthen information seeking skills and encourage critical thinking, you can present a project to your students without drawing sighs from all sides. Below are a few tips and suggestions to keep in mind when planning your next library research assignment.

## Librarians are here to

**help!** Instruction librarians are available to assist faculty in reviewing current library assignments or in developing new information literacy standards-based exercises and assignments that require students to gather, analyze, evaluate, and apply information. Encourage students to seek us out at the Reference Desk or schedule one-on-one appointments.

## Merge information literacy objectives with your course objectives.

This allows students to develop their information seeking skills and increase their comprehension of course content.<sup>1</sup> Many information literacy objectives also reinforce skills that will be needed in their lives be-

yond college.

**Vary the types of assignments.** Assigning an assortment of projects lets students work on different information skills. Instead of the traditional research paper, consider assigning case studies, annotated bibliographies, web site comparisons, or guided research journals. Librarians can help faculty adapt these types of assignments to fit your course content or disciplinary goals.

**Check the currency of your library assignments.** Information sources are constantly evolving and it's important to make sure assignments require students to use only up-to-date resources. By providing the library with a copy of your assignment, we can help identify any potential problems or comment on availability of resources.

**Consider re-wording assignment instructions.** Let's face it, some students need very detailed instructions when approaching an assignment. For example, telling students they cannot use the Internet may cause stress and frustration.

(cont. page 4)

## Introducing PITTcat+ : The New Library catalog

Beginning in Spring Term '09, you'll see a considerable difference when you click on the "Find Books" tab on the Owen Library web page. The University Library System (ULS) is pleased to announce PITTcat+, the new library catalog. PITTcat+, which has been in beta testing since August, is more user friendly and visually pleasing, and has the feel of a site such as Amazon.com or Google Books.

So how else is PITTcat+ different from its predecessor (now called PITTcat Classic)?

### More Material

In addition to all the great material you're used to (books, e-journals, CDs, DVDs, and maps), you can now search all the items in the Describe Digital Collections, which includes photographs, manuscripts, texts, and much more. Each PITTcat+ query will also automatically search for magazine and journal articles related to your search terms. Additionally, your search will include cover images, tables of contents, and book reviews for close to one million books.

### Easier to Search

The new catalog will allow you to quickly refine your search by format, date of publication, language, author, topic, etc. You can also narrow the search results down to items in Johnstown or material available only online. And to save you even more time, with one click PITTcat+ will even show you only items that aren't checked out.

### Easier to Discover

An innovative visual word cloud displays variant spellings of your search term(s), associated words, and even the same word in other languages to make sure you don't miss any relevant items. You can even save any search as an RSS feed so that you're notified when new material is added to PITTcat+ that is relevant to your research or interests.

PITTcat+ can be accessed by clicking on the "Find Books" or Faculty and Student Express tabs on the library web page, or the PITTcat link in the upper right corner of the page. Alternately, you can start exploring the new catalog by going directly to <http://pittcatplus.pitt.edu>. To help with the transition, PITTcat Classic will continue to be available Spring '09 and beyond. §

The screenshot displays the PITTcat+ library catalog interface. At the top, there's a search bar with the query 'Catcher in the Rye' and a 'GO' button. Below the search bar, it shows 'Results 1 - 10 of 54 for Catcher in the Rye, sorted by: relevance'. The main content area lists several book entries for 'The catcher in the Rye'. Each entry includes the title, author (e.g., Salinger, J. D.), publisher, and availability status (e.g., 'Not Checked Out', 'Charged'). A word cloud on the left side of the page features various words related to the search term, such as 'potato', 'proclamation', 'wheat', 'execution', 'inn', 'plot', 'upon', 'trousan', 'tin', 'house', 'per', 'ballad', 'thá', 'qin', 'inside', 'executimier', 'oato', 'barley', 'poultry', 'popish', and 'oats'. The interface also includes navigation tabs like 'Zoom!', 'Ask Us', 'Find Articles', 'Course Reserves', 'My Account', and 'Library Home'. A 'Refine' sidebar on the right allows users to filter results by location, availability, format, subject, language, publication date, author, and library form.

## Creating Effective Research Assignments (cont.)

Many students believe that the content found in the Pitt Digital Library, including online journals and electronic books, is off limits because it's on the "Internet."

**Integrate librarians into the project.** A great way to do this is by scheduling library instruction to help students put the project in a frame of reference. Not only will we help with creating assignments, we can design custom resource guides and handouts for your students. You can also add these and the librarian's contact information to Blackboard. And here's the clincher: if you wish, we can even grade the assignment for you!

It may be time to re-think the traditional library research project. Instead of focusing on having students gather a set number of sources for a standard term paper, look at assignments that teach students how to think, how to ask questions, and how to use different strategies to gather information to answer those questions.<sup>2</sup> Take the first step by contacting **Melissa Mallon, Library Instruction Coordinator, at x7287 or mnmallon@pitt.edu** to discuss your interest in creating assignments/exercises that reinforce critical

thinking skills. And did I mention that we don't mind grading these assignments? §

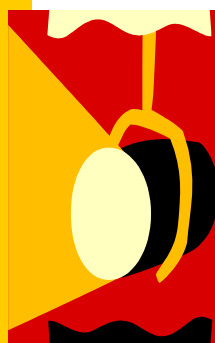
-Melissa Mallon

<sup>1</sup>Mahaffy, Mardi. "Encouraging Critical Thinking in Student Library Research: An Application of National Standards." *College Teaching* 54.4 (2006): 324-327.

<sup>2</sup>Cheney, Debora. "Problem-Based Learning: Librarians as Collaborators and Consultants." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4.4 (2004): 495-508.

### Faculty Spotlight on... Faculty / Librarian Collaboration

Did you know that the librarians at Owen Library are willing and able to work with you on any number of projects? From designing tests that assess students' information literacy skills, to creating innovative library research assignments, to helping with your own library research efforts, librarians are available to help you reach your goals. Make an appointment with a librarian today to discuss building a collaborative partnership!

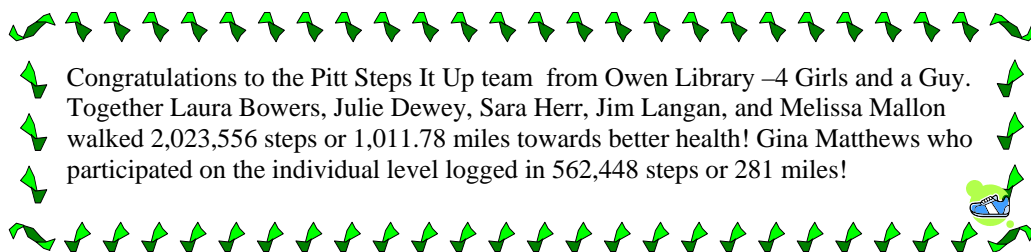


### Owen Library Hours Spring Term

**Sunday** 1:00 pm - 12:00 Midnight  
**Monday - Wednesday** 8:00 am - 12:00 Midnight  
**Thursday** 8:00 am - 11:00 pm  
**Friday** 8:00 am - 6:00 pm  
**Saturday** 10:00 am - 6:00 pm

**\*\* Computer lab closes 15 minutes prior to closing of the library.**

**\*\*Hours vary during holidays and between terms.**



Congratulations to the Pitt Steps It Up team from Owen Library –4 Girls and a Guy. Together Laura Bowers, Julie Dewey, Sara Herr, Jim Langan, and Melissa Mallon walked 2,023,556 steps or 1,011.78 miles towards better health! Gina Matthews who participated on the individual level logged in 562,448 steps or 281 miles!

### Owen Library Contact Information

Patricia Balko	Collection Management Librarian	x 7290	balko@pitt.edu
William Caldwell	Night Circulation Supervisor	x 7300	woc7@pitt.edu
Julie Dewey	Administrative Assistant	x 7289	judewey@pitt.edu
Sara Herr	ILL/Circulation Assistant	x 7292	herr@pitt.edu
David Kupas	Access Services Librarian	x 1983	dmk24@pitt.edu
Jim Langan	Technical Services Librarian	x 7298	jlangan@pitt.edu
Melissa Mallon	Library Instruction Coordinator	x 7287	mnmallon@pitt.edu
Regina Matthews	Collection Management. Assistant	x 7280	buterbau@pitt.edu
Johanna Pedrazzani	Reference Specialist	x 7880	ppedrazz@pitt.edu
Deborah Rinderknecht	Library Director	x 7288	drinderk@pitt.edu