ABC-CLIO’s Online Databases Prepare Students for a Multicultural World at Bloomfield College

Preparing Students for a Multicultural World

SITUATION

Bloomfield College is a private, four-year coeducational college with a public mission. Founded in 1868, the college is affiliated with Presbyterian Church (USA). Today it is a Predominantly Black Institution (PBI), as designated by Congressman Donald Payne; roughly 60 percent of the students are African American, 20 percent are Latino American, and 20 percent are Anglo American. Located outside New York City, Bloomfield College pursues a mission of preparing students to attain academic, personal, and professional excellence in a multicultural and global society. It is famous for a strong nursing program as well as its well-known Art and Technology program, which offers degrees and coursework in video games and gaming as well as in music and in technology.

Challenge: Multicultural Literacy

Though students and faculty members conduct research, the emphasis is on pedagogy. Many of Bloomfield’s students were previously underserved, so the faculty works tirelessly to ensure that students reach their potential. The school recently received an Information Literacy grant, part of which focused on multicultural literacy. Danilo Figueredo, library director and author at Bloomfield, spearheaded the movement to purchase ABC-CLIO’s American Mosaic databases—resources that would give Bloomfield students a way to access high-quality, relevant information on a variety of cultures and ethnic groups. Figueredo is an expert on Latino culture, with over 11 books published on the subject, and has served as an advisor for the The Latino American Experience database.

SOLUTION

The American Mosaic provides an easy-to-access solution for students needing to research and find articles on a variety of subjects relating to multiculturalism. The databases contain thousands of articles as well as many images and videos, providing a dynamic, multimedia approach to understanding world cultures, and it comprises information from writers and scholars across the United States, giving a wide breadth of viewpoints and perceptions—a benefit that was especially compelling to Bloomfield's faculty.

The databases offer scholarly essays from multiple perspectives, enabling students to examine a subject from multiple viewpoints. Beyond authoritative, up-to-date articles and multimedia, students can access perspectives that provide invaluable additional insight on a particular subject. For example, if a student is researching Cesar Chavez, The American Mosaic will not only provide the historical facts of his life but will also supply opinions from a variety of sources, adding a full spectrum of information and color to the research. Figueredo liked to expose students to many types of resources. For assignments, he found that it is effective to combine The American Mosaic perspectives with JSTOR, a resource that allows students to search for relevant articles across a range of scholarly journals.
ENHANCING CRITICAL THINKING AND ANALYSIS

Teaching information literacy is a priority at Bloomfield College. To this end, the library provides a series of lectures with the dual purpose of providing information literacy instruction as well as training on the use of the ABC-CLIO databases as critical thinking and research tools. The instruction is presented within the context of specific events: for example, during Hispanic Heritage Month or African American History Month, lectures will focus on content contained in *The Latino American Experience* or *The African American Experience*. There are 40 to 60 information literacy sessions each semester, connected to a range of courses; thus, from Introduction to English to Social Science to Psychology, a majority of classes at Bloomfield benefit from the databases. Students in the information literacy program also meet with a librarian as needed.

EVALUATING SUCCESS

The Information Literacy program of classes has increased dramatically over the past several years, and the results have been outstanding. The vice president of the college supports the program’s continuation and is very interested in its progress.

THE FUTURE

As library director, Figueredo envisioned many ways in which new technology could enhance learning, and plans have been made to integrate the databases even more fully into curriculum as a reference tool. For instance, visual literacy instruction will be added using images and video found in the databases.

In January 2013, Bloomfield College opened a learning commons in the campus library called the Learning Hub with movable furniture, viewing facilities, space for lectures, and dedicated areas for students to congregate. There will be an information literacy classroom and another multipurpose classroom. These changes will allow for greater flexibility in accommodating a variety of teaching and learning styles.

In addition, Bloomfield is working to implement more online classes using Blackboard; the goal is 90 percent. The library will work with the radio station, journalism lab, and motion picture studio to offer more opportunities for collaboration. Bloomfield will also create a modern, high-tech space that accommodates all of the needs of the 21st-century learner, one that allows students to come and go, study, watch a film, work together on a project, listen to music, or host a performance.

“The databases help teach information literacy in a way the students can understand.”
—Danilo Figueredo, Library Director

Quick Facts

**Bloomfield College**
- Founded in 1868
- A Derby College campus

**Vision:** “Inclusive, inspirational and innovative learning communities: predicting and serving the needs of our learners, the economy and society”

**Primary Objective:** “Preparing individuals for the next phase of their lives: the world of work, entrepreneurship, advanced learning, career progression and to contribute as positive citizens”

**DISTRICT LEADER**
Danilo Figueredo
Library Director, Bloomfield College

**ABC-CLIO Databases Used:**
- American History
- *The African American Experience: The American Mosaic*
- *The American Indian Experience: The American Mosaic*
- *The Latino American Experience: The American Mosaic*