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:

Communications
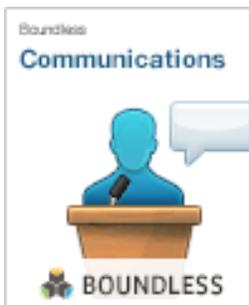
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Find it: eTextbook Website

Textbook Authors:

Boundless

Reviewed by:

Elizabeth Losh

Institution:

University of California, San Diego

Title/Position:

Professor

Format Reviewed:

Online

A small fee may be associated with various formats.
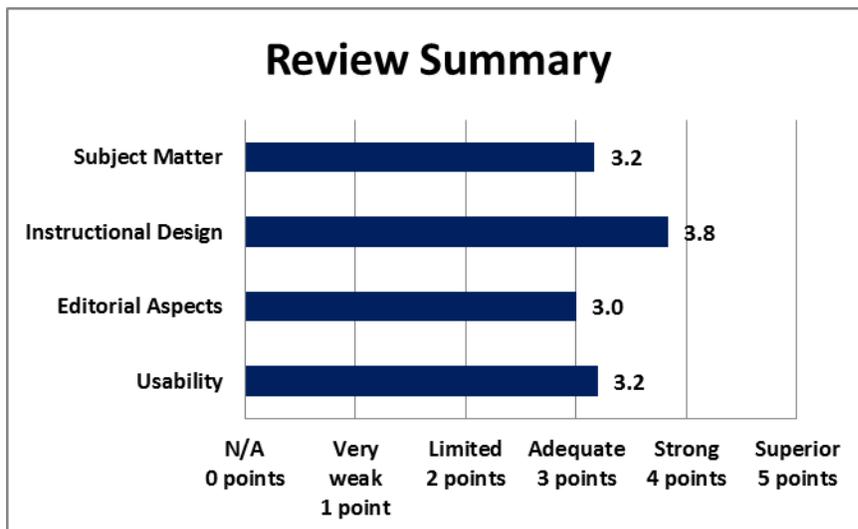
Date Reviewed:

December 2015

California OER Council eTextbook Evaluation Rubric

CA Course ID: COMM 110

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: 19 out of 30

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

- Although the framing of this textbook in career advancement and Toastmasters is somewhat old-fashioned, the bulk of the textbook is more timely, including sections on Internet research and the advantages and disadvantages of PowerPoint.
- The section on the history of public speaking is somewhat simplistic, and there is less informed discussion of questions of cultural sensitivity, ethnocentrism, and difference than some other open source textbooks.
- The section on ethics may be too limited (focusing on plagiarism), and the section on anxiety could use more research from social psychology and other fields. The approach to the writing process may be more linear than many may prefer.
- The section on Internet research methods is relatively solid, with discussions that go beyond Boolean searches to address issues such as proprietary search algorithms and how to find additional sources via Wikipedia.

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: 23 out of 35

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

- The Boundless search engine indexes many titles and navigation could be improved.
- The availability of PowerPoint templates is helpful for those using classroom instruction.
- Quizzes are sometimes overly simple (and thus not dependent on completing assigned readings) and learning objectives can be somewhat generic.
- The explanatory style of the textbook is extremely accessible.

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: 15 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook:

- This textbook makes limited use of multimedia and incorporates relatively few URLs (which have the downside of becoming dated).

Usability (25 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: 16 out of 25

Please provide comments on any aspect of access concerning this textbook.
- HTML design should display on most devices, but the use of javascript and layout elements may impede accessibility for students with visual impairments.
- This textbook is designed to be extensible and easily edited.
- The hyperlinked organization of this textbook has both drawbacks and advantages.
- The ad content may be distracting, although an ad-free version is available.

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: 5 out of 10

Overall Comments

If you were to recommend this textbook to colleagues, what merits of the textbook would you highlight?
- The how-to tone is appealing and accessible, and sections on Internet research are timely.

What areas of this textbook require improvement in order for it to be used in your courses?
- More case studies from public discourse (especially from the sciences) would be needed.
- More instruction in graphic design is critical for students using slides in presentations.
- The section on the history of rhetoric is too rudimentary for courses with a rhetorical orientation.
- The judgmental tone about "slang" and "profanity" might not be constructive for students in urban areas acquiring norms of academic English who might be interested in how genres of stand-up comedy model situations in public speaking.

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.