In an effort to establish an OER Network on our campus that would keep costs down for students, the J. Eugene Smith Library hosted an outreach event on March 27, 2017. Our speaker was Kevin Corcoran, the Executive Director of the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC). He gave a presentation on the newest developments and campus initiatives in Connecticut and nationwide. The attendees learned why this issue is important for students and faculty as well as how to find authoritative OER sites.

While textbooks come with a hefty price tag, and therefore the impact of savings for students is the most apparent, this is about more than textbooks. There is a wealth of materials out there in the OER world suitable to enrich the teaching and learning experience through innovative supplemental resources that are often interactive, come in multimedia formats, and serve every learning style. The academic freedom to choose instructional materials that best meet students’ needs and educational goals is much greater when considering the wide range and affordability of OER resources in comparison to traditional publishers’ packages. “Open” is not equivalent to “free” as in free access to content on the Internet. It rather means a free grant of permission for the 5Rs: retain, reuse, revise, remix, redistribute. The creative commons licenses attached to these resources clearly mark their range of usability.

The attempt to make education affordable to all is a growing movement worldwide. In the spirit of knowledge sharing, the quantity of valuable resources is steadily growing. This includes the usual set of accompanying materials that instructors have come to value, such as presentation slides, quiz banks and exercises. One example of free high-quality textbooks is OpenStax (https://openstax.org), a nonprofit organization with a library of over twenty textbooks that partners with other groups to provide affordable courseware. These books are authored by college professors and peer-reviewed, so the evaluation process has been made easier. It is definitely worth the time to explore OER further.

In an effort to establish an OER Network on our campus that would keep the momentum going, we invited faculty who already use open educational resources in their classroom to share their experience and be available as a contact person for their respective departments. Dr. Kim Ward from the Math Department demonstrated how she uses a free textbook and supplemental practice materials for her course in Blackboard. She was the recipient of a $1,000 OER grant received from the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) System Office. This compensated her for the time she took to redesign her course in order to make higher education more affordable for our students. Another strong proponent of the use of OER is Dr. David Cox, Professor of Physics, who designed his courses with textbooks that are available to students at no cost.

We also have faculty who successfully combine library resources like books on reserve, eBooks and articles from our many valuable databases for required reading so that their students are not further financially burdened by the cost of extra course materials. This approach serves the purpose of using resources the students already paid for with their tuition, teaches them how to use library resources, and do scholarly research. For a growing list of campus advocates please visit our OER guide.

As a student representative we had Ailyn Dilone from the Eastern Student Government Association (SGA) join us. She gave an account of the effects of steadily rising textbook costs from the perspective of students. Her presentation was the result of research conducted on the ECSU campus and confirmed the overall trend that students either do not purchase the textbook at all, which negatively affects their learning success, or drop classes altogether because they cannot afford the required materials. Free or affordable textbooks would allow students to do their readings, come prepared to class, and do their homework. If students spend less hours working to pay for textbooks, they have more time to study. The use of OER supports student retention and shows that we care!

And lastly, for the practical part of integrating OER into Blackboard, we had Anik Vasington join us from the Center for Instructional Technology (CIT). The CIT folks can be found on the 4th floor of the Smith Library and do an excellent job of assisting faculty with any technical tasks related to their instruction. They will be available to help embed OER into Blackboard whether these are adopted or self-created materials.

So go ahead, adopt, adapt, reuse, remix, create from scratch, and share. The possibilities are endless, and there is much to discover.

Join our Eastern OER Network for a collaboration on campus to make higher education more affordable for our students. To learn more, for a listing of OER resources, and to network, check out our guide on Open Educational Resources, accessible from the library home page under Research Guides, http://easternct.libguides.com/openedu.
EASTERN HAS A HIDDEN TREASURE!
It is hiding in the J. Eugene Smith Library in the northeast corner of the third floor. If you come up the stairs from the second floor, and turn right you will see a room with comfortable seating, gorgeous artwork, and a shelf of books along one wall. Or if instead you continue forward you will see another room with comfortable seating, stunning art, and another shelf of books along the wall. These two rooms encompass the Library’s Caribbean Collection. Besides the fact that all the books and all the art pertain to the Caribbean region, there are two more clues that this is the Caribbean Collection. Two of the walls hold plaques, one commemorates the Reverend Collin B. Bennett ’81 Caribbean Collection, and the other honors the Reverend Collin Bennett with an image of the man and includes some background information on his life. Why is the collection named after this man? And what is in this collection?
The collection was named for the benefactor of the collection, Collin B. Bennett, Eastern Class of 1981. He was a true philanthropist, as he not only gave charitable aid, but gave tirelessly of himself for the betterment of the communities of Eastern Connecticut State University and the greater Hartford area. He was involved with promoting Eastern in many ways, through a teacher exchange partnership with Jamaica, by helping Eastern students, and by opening an office building in Hartford where classes were taught by Eastern faculty. He was awarded and honored by countless groups in Connecticut and Jamaica. Eastern presented him with its Distinguished Alumni Award in 1994 for his outstanding accomplishments and service to the University and the community. He received the Order of Distinction of the Government of Jamaica, for outstanding services rendered to Nationals abroad and surrounding areas, and countless other community service and leadership awards from the National Association of Jamaican Americans and Supportive Organizations to the Central Connecticut Business League. He was on the boards of the Pan American Development Corporation, the Salvation Army, the Urban League of Greater Hartford, the State of Connecticut Community Colleges, the Hartford Public Library, and he was a Hartford City councilman. He became a Reverend later in life and died in June 1998.
He strongly believed in the power of education. He saw what Hurricane Gloria did to Jamaica and said this, “Hurricane Gloria destroyed nearly everything the people of Jamaica owned, and it made me realize how lucky I was. I also saw people in abject poverty with no money have a certain dignity about them. Even with nothing, they still shared what they had. Because they valued education, often, what they shared was a book, which impacted me so profoundly that I devoured books all my life” (Bachman, The Legacy of the Collin Bennett Family at Eastern 5). He also said “As long as we are here, we must promote quality education, not only for our children, but also for our neighbors’ children. Education is power. The more people are educated, the better understanding there will be” (Parks 1).
With his convictions, generosity, and vision for education, he worked with many educators to advance Eastern Connecticut State University. In fact, the catalyst for the idea of a special Caribbean collection was Dr. Beverly J. Anderson, former Dean, School of Arts and Sciences, at Eastern, herself a native of Jamaica. She and Rev. Bennett are in the photo, working hard to make the Collin Bennett Caribbean collection a reality. It started as a new collection of 250 volumes and was formally opened in October 2000 during a dedication in conjunction with a conference on The Role of the Caribbean People in Building the Panama Canal. It now holds more than 3,000 books on art, literature, history, music, sports, politics, economics, folklore, plant and animal life, women, migration, race, and religion of the Caribbean nations, especially Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. There are books by and about famous representatives of the region, like Bob Marley, Derek Walcott, Jamaica Kincaid, Marcus Garvey, Esmeralda Santiago, Edwidge Danticat, Oscar Hijuelos, and Junot Díaz, to name a few. New books are always being added to enrich the collection and keep it current. It is varied and comprehensive. It includes databases, journals, and reference materials that may be located in a different area of the Library. It supports not just one course or program but many. The collection is very special and worth exploring. And don’t get me started on the gorgeous artwork that enhances the space. That is for another article. Or come see for yourself!
Eastern Baseball & Softball has a long and brilliant history!
What building now stands on the original Eastern baseball field?

a) Cervantes Parking Garage  
b) Student Center  
c) Smith Library  
d) Science Building

Send your answer to askarchives@easternct.edu

Previous Trivia Answer – Laurel Hall • We had THREE Winners – Congratulations Dale Dubina, Bev Canfield, Roberta Mateo
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- Friends of Eastern $50-99
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The library will gift plate a book in your name, or in honor or memory of someone you designate, for a donation of $50 or more.

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