



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:

Boundless: Art History



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Find it: [eTextbook Website](#)

Textbook Authors:

Boundless

Reviewed by:

Beverly Grindstaff

Institution:

California State University, San Jose

Title/Position:

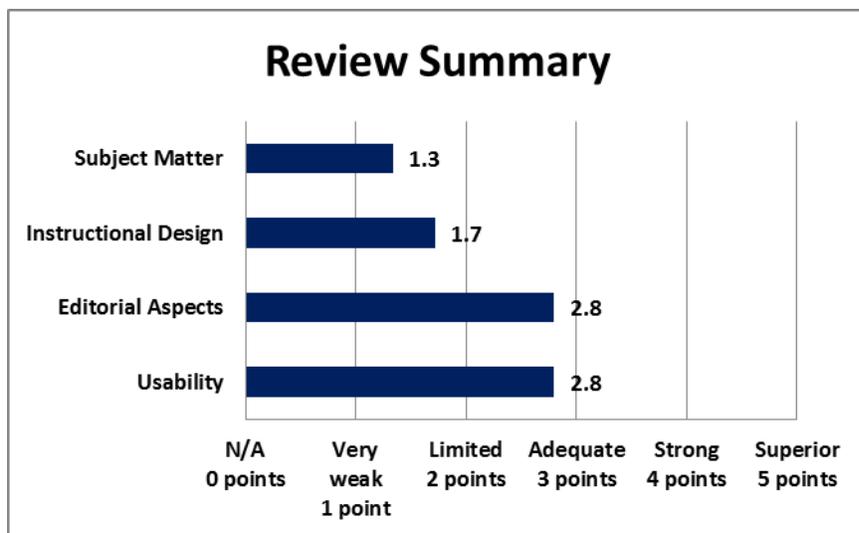
Professor

Format

Reviewed:

[Online](#)

A small fee may be associated with various formats.



Date Reviewed:

March 2015

California OER Council eTextbook Evaluation Rubric

CA Course ID: [ARTH 120](#)

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				
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: 8 out of 30

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

- Boundless Art History does not present a consistent voice nor engage the terms or key concepts central to a study of the history of art. Errors of fact are compounded by a focus on irrelevant. For example, the section on the Olmec highlights the “colossal heads” in its introduction and key points sections, and sets its Learning Objective as “Describe the colossal heads of the Olmec.” Very rudimentary points repeat without introducing actual information, and are followed by a paragraph of highly detailed information that in the end proves inconclusive. Examples of the former from a typical three-paragraph excerpt read, “Wrought in a large number of mediums like jade, clay, basalt, and greenstone among others; a good deal Olmec art is surprisingly naturalistic. In addition to making human and human-like subjects, Olmec artisans were adept at animal portrayals as seen in . [end of paragraph]”. Examples of the latter read, “The discovery of a colossal head at Tres Zapotes in the nineteenth century spurred the first archaeological investigations of Olmec culture by Matthew Stirling in 1938. Seventeen confirmed examples are known from four sites within the Olmec heartland on the Gulf Coast of Mexico. Most colossal heads were sculpted from spherical boulders but two from San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán were re-carved from massive stone thrones.” What did Matthew Stirling discover during his investigation? What is the significance of Tres Zapotes, San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán, and the “four sites” within Olmec culture? Not only does the reader learn very little about the “colossal heads,” but also no indication is given of anything else the peoples of this culture did, believed, or otherwise accomplished. The observations made in regard to the concept “The Olmec” apply to some degree to every section, and the entire is marked by a lack of cohesive discussion that presents related facts, provides context, or otherwise supports a study of the history of art. These are serious shortcomings

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: 12 out of 35

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

- I have lectured on nearly every topic included in this book, a process that means reading the leading literature, synthesizing historical, social and other relevant contexts, engaging appropriate methodologies and theories, and compiling a set of facts in a logical way to convey information about specific works, styles and/or cultures. That said, I found reading the Boundless Art History for content to be perplexing. Discussions throughout tend to be uneven, key points inadequately supported, and emphases placed on minor or extraneous points. For example, coverage of the important topic “Illuminations in the Gothic Period” is given a 76-word paragraph, of which the majority discusses the simple numbers of books in the libraries of Philip the Bold and “a number of his friends and relations”. The paragraph does not address its topic, and its alternate account is incomplete and ultimately inconclusive in itself and in relation to surrounding paragraphs. These are serious flaws.

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 laid out 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: 14 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- The Boundless Art History is distinguished by its ease of navigation, integration of content and images, periodic self-quizzes at the end of concept section, and overall site layout. That said, the entire is riddled with misspellings, errors of fact, misuse of terms, and anomalies that appear related to the process of copying online sources. See for example the persistent “Neueu” instead of the German Neue, the peculiar inclusion of Austrian painter Egon Schiele as one of three artists representing German Expressionism (the founders and dominant figures are excluded), and trade described as “commercial communications”. Barter systems that use “coins made of copper, bronze, gold, or silver”. Many sections are deeply flawed, as in the definition for the term codex (plural codices): “Codes / an early manuscript book a book bound in the modern manner, by joining pages, as opposed to a rolled scrollan official list of medicines and medicinal ingredients”. In many cases, it is not clear which problems are editorial and which are related to subject matter.

Usability (30 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: 14 out of 30

Please provide comments on any aspect of access concerning this textbook.

- The Boundless Art History appears exclusively online, and registration enables features such as access to PowerPoint templates and removes advertisements. It is very easy to navigate, with chapters divided into sequential concepts and clear and intuitive features. The edit function on all section raises questions about its use as a stable and shared course textbook.

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: 1 out of 10

Overall Comments

If you were to recommend this textbook to colleagues, what merits of the textbook would you highlight?

- I am unable to recommend Boundless Art History as a legitimate textbook as content in all reviewed chapters derives wholly from Wikipedia <www.wikipedia.org> and Wiktionary <www.wiktionary.org>.

What areas of this textbook require improvement in order for it to be used in your courses?

- Everything related to content from source to basic mechanics would need radical revision, not least of which is removal of all Wikipedia and Wiktionary content presented in lieu of legitimate scholarship.

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