Instruction Section

Association of College and Research Libraries
and American Library Association

5 Things You Should Read About
Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

The Series
This is the sixth in the "5 Things" series. The 5 Things we recommend are intended to be eclectic and thought-provoking. They may be journal articles, blog posts, podcasts, interviews, reports, or just about anything else that we think is important to read, watch or hear about this topic. For the general concept, this series is deeply indebted to the EDUCAUSE "Seven Things You Need to Know About…" reports.

The Topic
As higher education faces increasing scrutiny with regard to tuition rates, student success and online education, interest has been building around the idea of massive open online courses, commonly referred to as MOOCs. MOOCs provide a model for open, often free, online education and have the potential to disrupt the current education model. With limited data on how and in what situations MOOCs might be useful and what role libraries play in their design and implementation, global conversations continue to grapple with their place in education. The five resources below aim to highlight some of the issues and challenges of MOOCs and their evolving role in higher education.

1
Butler, Brandon. 2012. "Massive Open Online Courses: Legal and Policy Issues for Research Libraries (Issue Brief)." *Association of Research Libraries*. http://www.arl.org/storage/documents/publications/issuebrief-mooc-22oct12.pdf.

This short white paper outlines and discusses basic legal and policy issues related to massive open online courses (MOOCs) and the role of research librarians in their support. Such issues center mainly on fair use, open access and accessibility for persons with disabilities. In addition to traditional roles of academic support and copyright counsel, MOOCs present research libraries with new challenges. The author provides interpretation and guidance in applying fair use principles and analysis to the MOOC environment, and also gives consideration to challenges presented by licensing. This succinct, informative paper will be valuable in framing discussions and analysis, and helping guide the development of library strategies and policies for academic libraries.
Approximate reading time: 20 minutes

2
Chronicle of Higher Education. n.d. "What You Need to Know About MOOCs." Accessed April 18, 2013. http://chronicle.com/article/What-You-Need-to-Know-About/133475/.

This regularly updated source provides basic information about MOOCs and a timeline of developments from 2008 to present. Entries on the timeline summarize previously-published *Chronicle* articles and include full-text links. The timeline provides an overview of the topic and the articles offer opinions and analysis as well as factual reports. Readers may check the site for new developments as it is updated regularly.
Approximate reading time: 30 minutes

3 Kop, Rita, Hélène Fournier, and John Sui Fai Mak. 2011. "A Pedagogy of Abundance or a Pedagogy to Support Human Beings? Participant Support on Massive Open Online Courses." *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 12 (7): 74-93, http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1041/2042.

The authors of this paper suggest that facilitating a course in an open learning environment supported by emergent technologies requires a shift in pedagogic thinking. This study examined two MOOCs to determine the influence of technologies on the design of the courses. The results inform design considerations in the development of a successful MOOC, such as levels of social and teaching presence, a sense of community, and the need for teachers to develop ways of coaching and mentoring online, as well as to aggregate and curate the massive amounts of information being generated.
Approximate reading time: 30 minutes

4 Mahraj, Katy. 2012. "Using Information Expertise to Enhance Massive Open Online Courses." *Public Services Quarterly* 8 (4): 359-68. doi: 10.1080/15228959.2012.730415.

Where do librarians fit in the world of MOOCs? Mahraj encourages librarians to view MOOCs as the next level of knowledge facilitation, building on established information literacy instruction practices and open content initiatives. In contrast to other articles on MOOCs and library organizations/institutions, Mahraj's focus is at the level of the individual. She identifies a range of potential roles for librarians curious about MOOCs and describes succinctly the ways in which our own expertise must evolve in order to participate effectively.
Approximate reading time: 15 minutes

5 Tschofen, Carmen, and Jenny Mackness. 2012. "Connectivism and Dimensions of Individual Experience." *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 13 (1): 124-43. http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/1143.

Connectivism was introduced in 2005 as a learning theory for the digital age and emphasizes the role of the social and cultural context in learning. The authors explore the relationship between elements of connectivity (believed to be necessary for effective online learning) and the individual. They look at how our personality and self-determination impact connective environments.
Approximate reading time: 45 minutes