



ALA Office for Information Technology Policy

## CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY IN LIBRARY SERVICES

### OITP NAMES THREE LIBRARIES FOR 2010 RECOGNITION

The Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP) of the American Library Association (ALA) recognizes programs at three libraries for their best use of cutting-edge technologies in library services. The subcommittee for OITP's *Program on America's Libraries for the 21st Century* called for nominations in the fall of 2009 to identify library programs that "are serving their communities with novel and innovative methods." Highlighting and promoting these programs will provide the library community with successful models for delivering quality library service in new ways.

After reviewing the submissions, OITP is pleased to showcase the following uses of cutting-edge technologies to provide both new and traditional library services. Representatives from these cutting-edge programs will be featured in an OITP-sponsored session at the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., on Saturday, June 26, 2010, from 10:30 a.m. to noon.

The three programs are Digital Amherst, a project of the Jones Library, Amherst, Mass.; Library-a-Go-Go, Contra Costa County Library, Pleasant Hill, Calif.; and the Course Views [Library Tools] Project, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, N.C.

### Digital Amherst

Digital Amherst provides digital historical and cultural materials—photographs and other images, articles, lectures and multimedia presentations—to Amherst locals, scholars and tourists. Digital Amherst also serves to encourage collaborations between cultural and educational institutions, support community building, and celebrate Amherst's 250th anniversary.

Created in response to heavy use of the Jones Library's Special Collections, Digital Amherst includes essays, images, audio files, Flickr and YouTube feeds, zoomable maps and dynamic timelines devoted to the past, present and future aspirations of the Amherst community. Project developers hope to add interactive capabilities in the near future to encourage community conversations in a dynamic digital environment.

Home Explore Exhibits Browse Items About Us Search Advanced Search

## DIGITAL AMHERST

Utilizing the historical and literary resources of the Jones Library of Amherst, Massachusetts, in collaboration with area residents and scholars, this site celebrates Amherst's 250th anniversary through images, multimedia, and documents that reflect the independent spirit of our people, creative works, and culture.

An ongoing repository of information, Digital Amherst will continue to grow, linking the town's unique heritage with the vitality of its present and the promises of its future.

### Explore Exhibits

- Amherst before 1759  
Early History
- The Peoples of Amherst  
Population Growth
- War, Peace, and Human Rights  
Amherst During Conflict
- Amherst and the Masses  
Creative Artists, Inspired Residents
- Amherst Neighborhoods  
Where We Live
- Amherst Architecture  
Styles and Structures
- Business, Industry, and Transportation  
Mechanisms and Services

### Featured Item

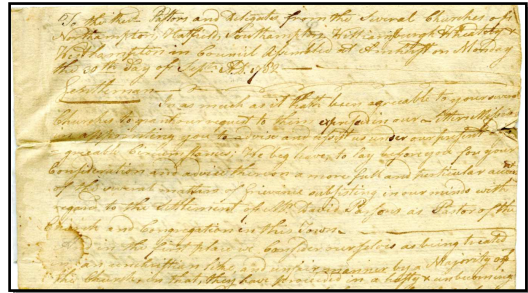
**Lithograph of the Emily Dickinson Homestead, 1856**  
Lithograph of the Dickinson Homestead on Main Street shortly after the Homestead was reacquired by Edward...

### Recently Added Items

- Amherst loses old houses  
Added 2009-12-23 10:58:13
- Article from the Springfield Republican describing the houses that once stood around the Town Common and at other areas near the center of...  
Added 2009-11-25 09:43:27
- Objections to the settlement of David Parsons as minister  
Written communication listing the grievances of members of the First Congregational Church to the settlement of the Rev. David Parsons, Jr., 85...
- Account book for Connecticut River transportation  
Added 2009-11-24 13:40:27
- Account book kept by unknown person recording transportation of goods such as salt, molasses, and rum, up and down the Connecticut River during the...

Visitors to the site will find access to hundreds of digitized historical documents and photos cataloged and tagged by topic, time period, collection and theme. For example, historians researching local reaction to the Revolutionary War will find a number of unique items including a letter from a local church congregation objecting to the appointment of a pastor who the congregation said was “not a friend to the independence of America” (see illustration).

Creating Digital Amherst presented a unique challenge to Special Collections as the department currently has no budget for technological development. Instead, the Digital Amherst team identified suitable open source software developed by George Mason University and services from Dreamhost, a commercial hosting service that provides free web hosting for non-profit organizations. The team then turned to local community members and academics to help create and provide content for the digital library.



“Teamwork was an absolutely essential component in creating Digital Amherst and one of the most rewarding aspects of this project,” team member Kate Boyle noted. “We are three people with very different skills and abilities,” Boyle added, “and the creative process had some challenging moments. Yet our shared enthusiasm for this project produced a synergy that propelled us forward.”

Lead Technical Developer Kirstin Kay commented that “using Omeka software as the backbone of our digital library allowed us to focus our limited resources (both labor and money) on high impact areas. The very easy administrative and cataloging areas were simple to learn and allowed us to quickly get items 'live'. Pre-made design themes gave us a jumping-off point to really customize the public interface to showcase our collection.”

“Digital Amherst is intended to be an ongoing repository of information,” said Tevis Kimball, curator of Special Collections at Jones Library, “and it will continue to grow through collaboration with the community, local schools, academic institutions, Amherst town departments and the Historical Commission.”

For more information: [www.digitalamherst.org/](http://www.digitalamherst.org/).

## Library-a-Go-Go

The Library-a-Go-Go service uses fully automated touchscreen materials-lending machines to provide stand-alone library services in non-library environments. A customer uses his or her library card to log in to the system and chooses a genre and then a title from a catalog of over 400 books. A robotic arm then delivers the book to the customer. Books can be returned to the same machine, and two of the three machines currently in

operation are available 24 hours a day. The Library-a-Go-Go machines are installed at two commuter transit stations and a well-trafficked shopping center. A fourth machine is planned for fall 2010.

The Contra Costa County Library system pioneered this service using European-based technology and the library's automation staff created the first lending machine program in the country to connect real-time to the main library system. Customer accounts are automatically updated, and returned books are made immediately available to other users.



This cutting-edge program meets two important functions for library users in Contra Costa County. First, the program meets the county's mandate to reach underserved populations in outlying areas without incurring additional costs or reducing current operations at existing branches. The library collaborated with the BART (rail) transit system and local retailers to determine the most effective locations for the lending machines. Deputy County Librarian Cathy Sanford noted that “at any given time, at least 25 percent of library materials are checked out from the Library-a-Go-Go machines.”

Additionally, the service creates a low-cost ability to offer access to library materials 24 hours a day. This increased access is responsible for a significant rise in the number of library cards issued in the program's first year of service.

“The library has determined that for some customers, Library-a-Go-Go is their main and often only library branch,” said Sanford. “An entire community in Contra Costa's Far East County now has access to materials 24 hours a day.”

For more information: [ccclib.org/locations/libraryagogo.html](http://ccclib.org/locations/libraryagogo.html).

## Course Views [Library Tools] Project

The NCSU Libraries implemented a cutting-edge service in response to the difficulty of creating and maintaining enough “course pages”—recommended resources for specific courses and assignments—to meet students' needs. The Course Views system provides pages for all 6,000 courses offered by over 150 departments at NCSU. Course Views dynamically generates these pages based on a combination of curriculum and course content, while providing tools to allow librarians to further customize the content for any

course. As a result, subject specialist librarians are able to recommend library resources with a reach far beyond traditional avenues of library instruction and broad disciplinary subject guides.

Over the past year, Course Views pages were included in nearly 900 sections of courses. During this time, the system processed 56,688 requests for Course Views pages representing over 1,700 unique courses in over 140 departments, an average of 1,232 page requests per week.

Course Views provides a student-friendly perspective, organized by course, and uses existing data sources to create custom content for a single course or an entire curriculum. This library tool has been incorporated into three different campus learning management systems to date including Blackboard and Moodle as well as the library website and reserves system.

Project developers note that though this cutting-edge program is technology based, successful implementation required significant collaboration with administration, library subject specialists, faculty and the campus IT community. Student focus groups were consulted at several stages of the project and following implementation to ensure that the program met the expressed needs of the student body. This collaboration resulted in a team-based approach that encouraged enthusiasm and buy-in across the campus.

“Our Course Views Team is thrilled to have been awarded the Office for Information Technology Policy's Cutting Edge Library Services honor,” said Kim Duckett, Principal Librarian for Digital Technologies and Learning. “The Course Views project (or Library Tools, the name by which our users know it) is built on collaboration across our library and the rest of NCSU.” Duckett noted that the mission of the NCSU Libraries is, in part, to define the leading edge of information services and collections in support of the university's mission. “Receiving this honor,” Duckett said, “is affirmation of this mission and an exciting recognition by our library colleagues.”

For more information: [www.lib.ncsu.edu/dli/projects/courseviews](http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/dli/projects/courseviews).

