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:

Smart History

License:

Smart History by Khan Academy is licensed under Copyright

Find it: **eTextbook Website**

Textbook Authors:

Khan Academy

Reviewed by:

Marla Burg

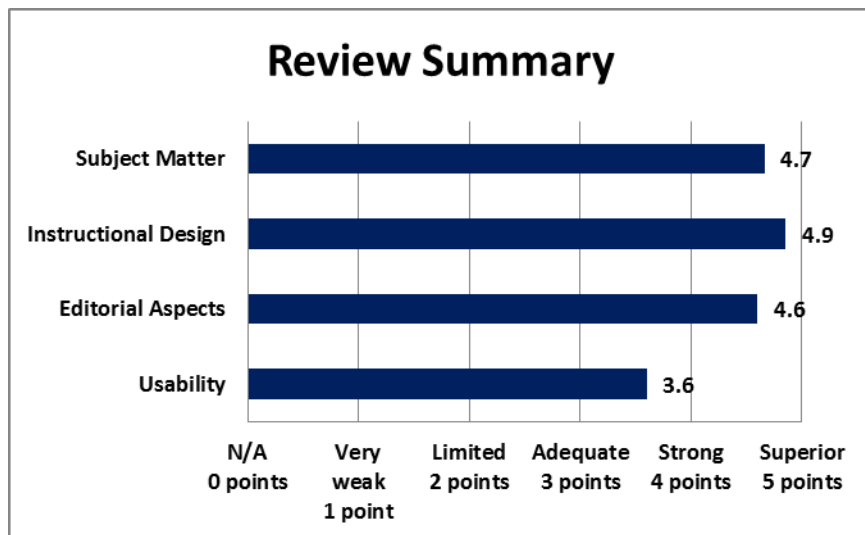Institution:

Ventura College

Title/Position:

Professor

Format Reviewed:

Online

A small fee may be associated with various formats.

Date Reviewed:

August 2015

Review Summary

Category	Score
Subject Matter	4.7
Instructional Design	4.9
Editorial Aspects	4.6
Usability	3.6

N/A 0 points — Very weak 1 point — Limited 2 points — Adequate 3 points — Strong 4 points — Superior 5 points

California OER Council eTextbook Evaluation Rubric

CA Course ID: ARTH 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

	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
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: 28 out of 30

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

- There is so much right about Khan Academy it would be easier to talk about what is wrong, but I'll save that for another box. Khan is not just a textbook, it's a conversation. Mostly between Beth Harris and Steven Zucker, but many "content specialists" are listed.
- These two scholars, who started out at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, morphed into Smarthistory.org, and were absorbed into Khan when the Gates Foundation infused it with funding, would seem to have the best job in the world. They take the viewer to the site of the artwork and address it in context as with no other medium I've ever seen. We understand how it functioned at the time it was produced and how it is experienced today, right down to street noises and kids pushing exhibit buttons and the like.
- I have used Khan for several years, both for classroom videos and online homework assignments, and from what I have seen, it is first rate (short format, engaging, pitched perfectly to a Community College beginning Art 01 student) without being at all condescending.

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: 34 out of 35

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

- If I can use it, I assume anyone can because I am a dinosaur of a teacher who had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the digital age and still miss transparencies and slide carousels.
- Khan Academy was designed to be intuitive and it is. Clean, clear, accessible; in short, the best innovation for instruction in Art Appreciation/History I have seen.
- Film footage and narration are seamlessly fused for clarity.
- Most of the voices are paced well and pleasant to listen to.
- The videos and articles are just the right length to hold the student's attention with engaging and memorable content.
- I'm learning things from it all the time and my students give me positive feedback (since they can earn extra credit points based on a fraction of the points they earn on the site, which tend to be in the tens of thousands).

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

	N/A (0 pts)	Very Weak (1pt)	Limited (2 pts)	Adequate (3pts)	Strong (4 pts)	Superior (5 pts)
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: 23 out of 25

Please provide comments on any editorial aspect of this textbook.

- Occasionally, the speakers will use a pronunciation that is new to me. Kore, for instance is heard as a one syllable word, whereas I have always heard it as two; Watteau is given a German "V" sound when I am used to the more Romantic "W". These are small quibbles. As far as I can tell, the editing is first rate.

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: 18 out of 25

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

- Khan is infinitely expandable, so I can hope that eventually all the images I need for my class will be on there. On the other hand, I wonder if more content will prove to mean more complicated navigation. I wonder if there isn't a sweet spot between the two which has already been reached. Because it is constantly being revised, the material is up to date. On the other hand, I've linked specific videos to Khan from my D2L page, only to find they have since been dropped. Oops. Awkward.

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: 10 out of 10

Overall Comments

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

- I have recommended Khan to all my colleagues for all the reasons previously stated, plus did I mention already IT'S FREE? I would further urge them to check out: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-seed/smarthistory_b_1847324.html (an article in the Huffington Post by John Seed proclaiming that Khan really is the textbook of the Future).
- I still feel the need for a paper, hold-in-the-hand textbook; I have found a relatively inexpensive, small textbook from Cognella (Condensed Art History, by Ronald Rarick) to provide students with a hard copy, stationary image to study for homework purposes. I have my students make their own flash cards, with their own sketches of the works they will be tested on, which shows you what a Luddite I am.

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

- It's not always easy to find a complete, static image of the work in question for study and sketch purposes

(see above box for how I use this). The videos are fluid and detailed, but sometimes you just need the image to hold still. I understand there is a bank of images on Flickr connected to Khan which a student can access, but I haven't figured it out. Sometimes it's easier to do a fresh Google search.

- In short, I do use Khan in my classroom, I do recommend it, I think it is the Superior product, hands down, of what you have offered me to evaluate. For it to be better, I have to become more adept at using it and finding workarounds to problems that arise with any digital resource, which are legion. Thanks for reading this.