

SUPPORTING INFORMATION LITERACY THROUGH CREDIBLE RESOURCES

GVRL: Learn how one source for specialized dictionaries helped students explore words and ideas in depth.

"We were looking for a source that would offer smart, scholarly discussions of key terms and concepts across the disciplines. I can rely on GVRL to give students an efficient way to find out how a term has been used."



Van Hillard, M.A., Ph.D.
Director of the College Writing Program and Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Writing Studies, Davidson College

A HISTORY OF EXCELLENCE

Established in 1837, Davidson College, a private liberal arts college in North Carolina has graduated 23 Rhodes Scholars, serves 1900 students, and is a recognized leader in undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative work across all academic programs. Van Hillard is director of the college writing program. To provide his students with access to research resources in virtually every academic, scholarly, and professional discipline, Davidson uses eBooks on GVRL.

ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

ACCESS TO A SINGLE, COMPREHENSIVE SOURCE

Davidson's rigorous first-year curriculum includes a required course called *Writing in the Liberal Arts*. With 14 students (typical at Davidson), the class is set up as a seminar in which students' works in progress are critiqued and discussed. "Its primary function is to familiarize students with a variety of discourses and help them develop skills in crafting intellectual and academic writing," says Van. Students also learn how intellectual writers fashion their discourses in response to others' analyses, interpretations, and arguments. "Students typically don't have practice in designing arguments that respond to what others have written about a particular topic," he says.

As part of learning critical analysis of texts and how to write rhetorically sophisticated prose, students also explore key terms. "There's a kind of tradition in literary and rhetorical studies of taking keywords and interrogating them," explains Van. "Many terms are used in various contexts. It's interesting and helpful for students to look into ways in which a term has been deployed in different ways for different reasons."

Those varied meanings are a primary reason why Van's students use GVRL, which Van learned about as director of the writing program at Duke University. He supported Davidson's library in acquiring the comprehensive eReference platform. "We were looking for a source that would offer smart scholarly discussions of key terms and concepts across the disciplines," says Van. GVRL delivers thousands of full-text proprietary titles from Gale and more than 100 strategic publishing partners.

more 

- With its depth of features and content, *GVRL* supports information literacy and reinforces the difference between authoritative resources and consumer-published content on the web.
- Instructors have peace of mind knowing that students are using credible, yet accessible resources.
- *GVRL*'s robust search capabilities allow students to work efficiently and have more time to focus on their writing. At the same time, ease of use and an engaging interface encourage further study and exploration.
- *GVRL*'s vast offerings include bibliographic essays and specialized dictionaries unavailable through other online resources.

■ BRIDGING THE GAP

THE RESOURCE STUDENTS NEED, THE CONVENIENCE THEY WANT

GVRL's user-focused navigation enables students to find what they need fast. They access *GVRL* from the library's research resources page. When they type in a key term, it conducts a federated search (simultaneous search of multiple resources) and provides specialized encyclopedias and dictionaries in which the term is defined.

Van appreciates that *GVRL* is comprehensive and that its resources are authoritative, yet readable. "Gale has the terms students need to know. It offers crisp bibliographic essays that direct students to specialized dictionaries offering meanings for various uses of terms beyond strict etymology," he explains. "They also offer introductions not found in traditional dictionaries, which explain how terms have been used in various academic contexts. It's important that students feel they're using certain terms with some authority, and *GVRL* allows them to do that."

When students peruse a document, they can see a two-page view and use a page flipper to scroll through it. *GVRL*'s downloadable PDFs allow for offline reading anytime, anywhere.

■ THE RESULTS

AUTHORITATIVE, YET READABLE MATERIAL

With its depth of features and content, *GVRL* supports information literacy and reinforces the difference between authoritative resources and consumer-published content on the web. "It's a nice introduction to how academic knowledge is sorted and archived. It's easy to use and doesn't throw students in the deep end. It lets them see a readable essay prepared for general readers by a scholar," says Van. He also likes that *GVRL* plays a role in helping students become more aware of how they're using a particular term. "These are terms that cross disciplines and are used in all sorts of ways. The worst thing would be for them to become buzzwords without much meaning."

GVRL supports Van's teaching efforts as well as students' learning efforts. "I can rely on *GVRL* to give students an efficient way to find out how a term has been used. I don't have to do that work. Some students wouldn't know quite how to begin. It's good for students to see how words are used—it legitimizes them. It's also an important lesson to see how words change over time." Would Van recommend using *GVRL* to a colleague? In a word, "Yes."



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