CCL-EAR COMMITTEE REVIEW
Gale Virtual Reference library
November 9, 2012

In October and November of 2012, selected members of the Council of Chief Librarians, Electronic Access to Resources Committee (CCL-EAR) undertook a "hands-on" study of Gale Virtual Reference Library.

Each reviewer independently, or in concert with other qualified professionals on their campus library staff, reviewed and evaluated Gale Virtual Reference Library. Though other faculty and/or staff may have helped in the review process, completion of the review was by the CCL-EAR committee members only and not transferred to others. Ratings were based upon the potential value of the service to the California Community Colleges as a whole and not solely on the needs of any specific campus.

This review looks mainly at the nine vendor-selected collections on offer with respect to content, interface, and cost.

The following attributes were examined and rated:
#1 Not Recommended
#2 Recommended with reservations as noted
#3 Recommended
#4 Outstanding offer and opportunity

I. **OVERVIEW:2.5, 2.5**
Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL) has been a mainstay in academic libraries for years. It offers a simple and appealing perpetual ownership model for reference collections: buy an ebook and it belongs to the library forever with a very reasonable annual hosting fee.

The product is a good fit for community colleges that want to host all or part of their reference collection in the cloud. Students can access GVRL titles from their computer, tablet, and smart phone 24/7. With an increasing amount of online classes and new ways of communicating with librarians (like chat, text, or twitter), students will find it extremely useful to have reference titles unbound from the physical library. In addition, GVRL has no digital rights management (DRM) policy, and instead offers unlimited simultaneous users, unlimited downloading and saving, and no need to check out ebooks electronically. This is an attractive model for reference content, making the works accessible to multiple users simultaneously and 24/7.

The nine vendor-selected collections currently on offer at the Consortium include new editions published in 2012 and 2013 by reputable reference publishers like Gale, Macmillan Reference, St. James Press, U-X-L, and Britannica. The works cover a variety of subjects in the social sciences, health, medicine, literature, and business, and have a target audience ranging from middle school students to college undergraduates. The titles are very current and would be good choices for high schools and two-year colleges. Institutions are not limited to the titles in these nine collections, but have the option of creating their own electronic reference collection by selecting individual titles from GVRL's very extensive catalog of ebooks from over 100 trusted publishing partners. However, individual works that are not included in the current offer would be purchased without Consortium pricing.

With a strong *caveat* regarding missing content in some volumes (addressed below), this is otherwise an excellent resource for colleges interested in having an electronic reference collection. The review team hopes that Gale acquires 100% of the full-text content that they license. There are a significant number of pre-2012 GVRL titles that have missing content.

II. DATABASE CONTENT/FORMAT: 2.5, 2.5
Institutions purchase ebooks under a perpetual ownership model where, after the initial purchase price, the institution owns all of their GVRL ebooks and pays a modest, capped hosting fee. If a new edition of an ebook is released, the institution will have to purchase the new edition in order to have updated content, and weed the older edition. This is different from the subscription model, in which institutions pay a yearly fee to have access to the latest information.

The collection pricing model highlights one of GVRL's strengths; it allows institutions to offer a large number of reference ebooks, especially multiple volume encyclopedias that can be accessed online without simultaneous user restrictions. This can be an attractive model for institutions that are offering more and more online classes and serving students who have less time to spend on campus. It is also attractive for institutions who want to move their reference collections from the book shelves to the cloud. A side effect of this model is that librarians must think about purchasing reference titles as a collection which may include titles of secondary importance.

For the recent consortium offer of GVRL collections, our reviewer was able to find reviews for fifteen out of a total of thirty-six titles. Of these fifteen reviews, thirteen were favorable. The content-level of the nine collections in the current offer ranges from middle school to the first two years of college. These collections are consistent with much of what community college libraries purchase, and their strength lies in content for pre-collegiate courses. The nine collections on offer, listed at the end of this review, include six collections of new editions (2012-2013) for community colleges in Social Science, Core Reference, Health and Medicine, Literature and Business, Literature and Medicine, and Business, as well as three collections in Remedial/ESL (2010-2013).

Subject Area: Lower Division
Community college-level collection titles are from trusted Gale, Macmillan Reference, and St. James Press, all are good and current choices for high school and the two-year college. Six of the collections on offer through the Consortium include titles supporting lower division courses, particularly in medicine and business.

As in the past, these collections contain reference materials that may be suitable for students pursuing specific AA or AS degrees such as Nursing (The Gale Encyclopedia of Nursing and Allied Health, 3rd Ed., Gale Encyclopedia of Public Health, and The Gale Encyclopedia of Mental Health, 3rd. Ed.), but not for other AA or AS degrees. While there are 10 business titles, only one, Encyclopedia of Management, 7th Ed., is considered a core title. The other titles can be used for individual classes and assignments. There are six literature titles included in the offer, none of which are considered core.

These six collections will support English composition courses as well as introductory history, sociology, religious studies, and philosophy courses. There are three science titles, each on very specific topics, which may be used for individual classes and assignments.

Subject Area: Basic Skills
Three of the nine collections are labeled as *Remedial/ESL* and include works published by U-X-L and Britannica which would be suitable for middle schools, or for literacy and basic skills college courses below credit/transfer. These have strengths in science, history and social/political science. Many of these titles will support ESL and lower-level pre-collegiate English composition classes. Due to the reading level of these titles, they will not support the second level of the pre-collegiate English reading and composition courses, those that lead directly into college-level English.

Catalog purchases outside of the Consortium
Outside of the Consortium pricing, institutions could create their own ideal electronic reference collections by purchasing other K-12 or academic titles from an extensive catalog on an individual title basis. The database is both broad and deep in titles and subjects. Gale currently has 107 publishing partners such as ABC-Clio, Britannica, MacMillan, Elsevier, Springer, ITSE, U of TX, Wiley-Blackwell, Cambridge and Greenhaven. Over 3000 titles (around 37%) on the GVRL platform are from 2011-2013, and include a good number of works that are less than five years old from respected publishers, including Gale. The full GVRL title list includes a significant number of award-winning works.

Missing Content/Text Suppression

That being said, missing content due to text suppression is a serious concern for those interested in purchasing any Gale electronic titles. Last May, the consortium posted an additional comment (Buchwald, 2012) to the 2008GVRL review. While using GVRL, librarians found that some content was missing, and in its place was the phrase, "This text has been suppressed due to author restrictions."

Gale contends that there is a disclaimer in the catalog for all titles that have missing content. In order to find the disclaimer from the landing page for GVRL catalog[1], a buyer must make the effort to click into the "Overview" page, the eleventh link down on the side navigation bar. The fine print disclaimer (see below) is phrased as boilerplate in the overview of the database.

Please Note: While Gale strives to replicate print content, in a small number of cases, some content may not be available due to rights restrictions.

There is a second disclaimer when one clicks on the title of a work with missing content: "While Gale strives to replicate print content, some content may not be available due to rights restrictions. Call your Sales Rep for details." It states that the title you are looking at *may or may not* have missing content, when in fact it often does have missing content.

One of the problems with the issue of text suppression is that when libraries have to choose between the ebook and the print - because most libraries cannot afford both - it should be a choice between formats, not content. Gale should do a better job of licensing content from its own authors and other publishers. If they are going to offer a title, they need to offer 100% of the title.

The other and more serious issue is that Gale isn't making any effort to notify Consortium libraries that their content is compromised. In fact, they seem to be ignoring the fact; in a questionnaire submitted for this review, a Gale representative responded, "Every title that we offer on Gale Virtual Reference Library is 100% full text." This is after Gale was asked to respond to the additional comment last spring.

Had text suppression not been an issue, both CCL-EAR reviewers would have rated the collection as an "Outstanding Offer and Opportunity" overall. To earn that, Gale should more aggressively acquire digital rights to their existing print content, and make buyers aware of the discrepancies, especially for important primary documents. At the very least, Gale needs to label incomplete titles on all of their communication (web, order forms, emails, etc.) with consortium libraries -- a simple asterisk with a note will do. Since many of the titles on the current offer will not be available until 2013, we cannot gauge the amount of missing content but hope that Gale will amend their licensing to alleviate this problem.

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[1]at http://www.gale.cengage.com/servlet/GvrlMS?msg=ma

III. SEARCH INTERFACE AND ACCESSIBLITY: 4, 3.5

GVRL is overall an accessible database. Available content can be downloaded in HTML, PDF, or MP3 for access from a wide range of devices, mobile and otherwise. The user can toggle between HTML and PDF versions of the text, and can choose to view PDFs one or two pages at a time.

> "The interface is available in 34 languages, ensuring the majority of library patrons will be able to navigate reference content in the language in which they are most comfortable. ReadSpeaker technology (text-to-speech functionality) is embedded in the resource and is available in 19 languages. In addition, GVRL features on-demand machine-aided content translation into 14 languages."
>
> (Gale Announces .., 2012)

GVRL can be accessed via IP authentication, referring URL, password, or proxy server (MS Proxy and EZ proxy). GVRL is cross-searchable with some other Gale products, and features unlimited simultaneous use. All current browsers including IE 8 & IE 9, Firefox, Firefox for Linux, Chrome 5.0 and Safari for Mac OS 10.6.x are supported.

The previous interface worked much as one might browse a print book, with expanding trees to open chapters and sections and the ability to download entire chapters without a limit. The much improved, new (2012) interface can be browsed by subject area, title, or searched from within a Google-like basic box or by using advanced search. One may search across the collection or limit to a specific series or title.

Gale has vamped up the display with full color book covers and tools. While not intuitive at first glance, the interface features a very useful "Help guide" pointing patrons to instructions on searching, downloading and translating content.

Basic Search

The proprietary Basic Search window is a Google-style search box without filters or limiters that queries typically indexed fields as well as full-text, ranked by indexed fields, then by proximity. Basic search has an implied AND for Google-style searches, but is not a keyword search. The basic search assumes the terms AND, OR, NOT are logical operators regardless of capitalization unless bound in a phrase search. There is no "Revise search" button in Basic Search, but there is a "Previous Searches" link in the navigation bar. From a selected article result found using Basic Search, a much more accessible "Search all volumes" or "Search within this volume" keeps the original search terms in a box to the left of the article, saving a step for researchers. Misspellings still bring back relevant results.

Advanced Search

As noted in the previous CCL-EAR review

> *[T]he Keyword option searches significant fields in documents, including titles, introductory text, and authors. It also searches the first 50 words in the article as well as back of the book index terms that have been assigned to articles.Keyword searches a broader range of fields and produces a result list with a high degree of relevance. It is significant what a Keyword Search does NOT search: complete text (unless selected), references, and footnotes. Including such*

random fields as references in searches has caused many misleading result lists in competing database products.

<div align="right">(CCL-EAR, 2008)</div>

The very good advanced keyword search algorithm does not seem to have been modified much since the 2008 CCL-EAR review.

One can limit in advanced search by target audience: Academic, Children's, General, Professional, and Trade. One may also choose to limit by author, edition, ISBN, or publisher, as well as other more common limiters. ne can "Revise Search" in advanced search using the prompt link. There is also a controlled Subject Guide Search available from the Advanced Search bar, though it is not easy to locate from the landing page.
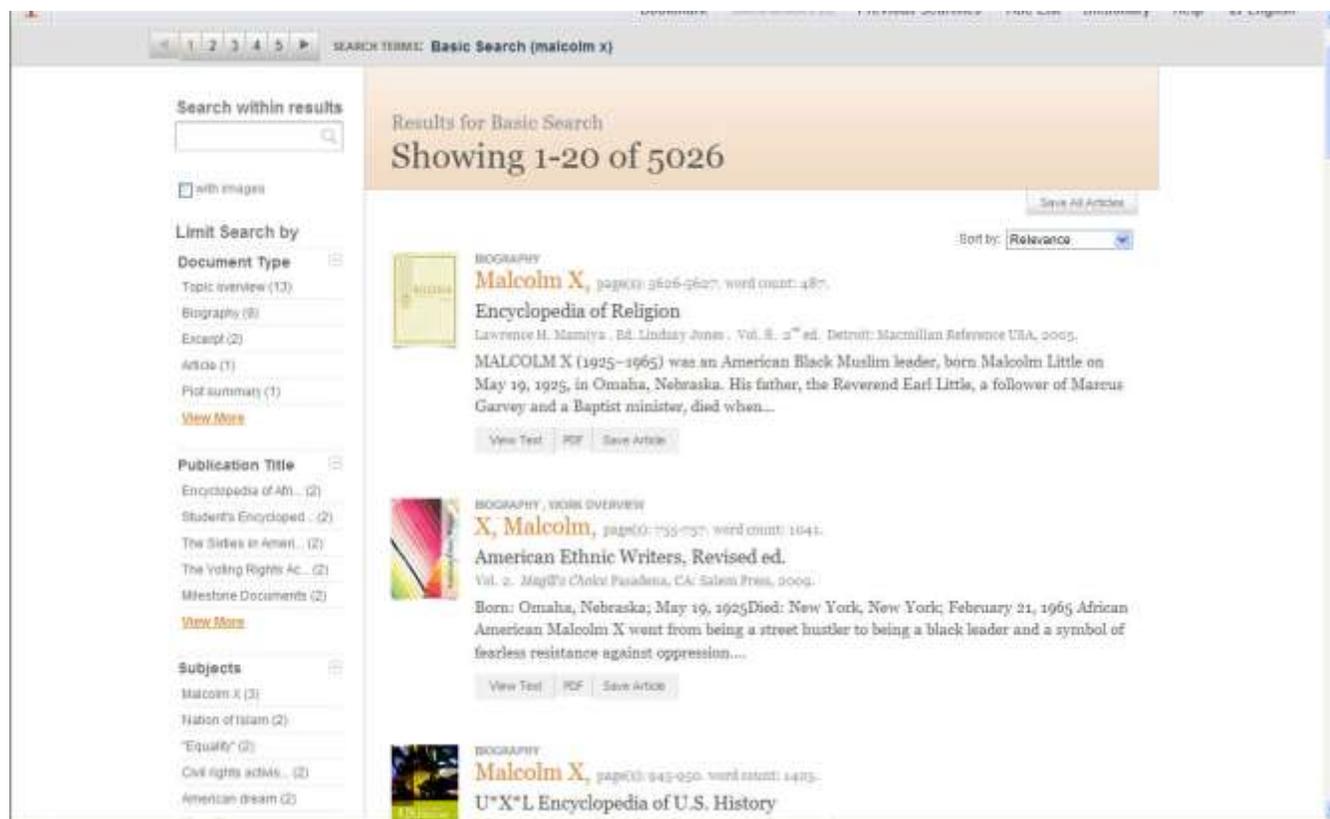
Results List

Result lists appear with the search term(s) in context in basic or advanced search. Results can be narrowed or sorted by such fields as Relevancy, Document Title, Publication Date, or Publication Title, or Publication Language. Articles are easily saved from the results list with a "Save Article" button for each article or a "Save All" button at the top. One can also "Revise Search" or "Search Within Results" easily from the left side bar. The "Previous Search" button allows one to combine and revise previous searches.

In comparing Basic search and Keyword searching, using Basic search for [malcolm x] AND [ballot or the bullet] brings back expected results, though the primary document is listed as number 11 of the results. Keyword searching the same terms using advanced search brings the speech back in the top three results.

The Article Level

Articles are paginated in both HTML and PDF versions. Articles load quickly regardless of format. Tools for downloading (Print, E-mail, Download, Citation Tools, Listen, Download MP3, Download PDF to eReader) have been moved to the top navigation bar, which seems a little confusing at first with a new top navigation appearing. Downloading and text-to-speech reader links might be more accessible closer to the text, and would be more in line with other vendor interfaces.

The Citation tool allows one to save or export a machine-generated citation in current MLA or APA format to EndNote, ProCite, Reference Manager, or RefWorks. The Download tool directs one to "send PDF documents directly to your eReader via your @Kindle address or drag and drop PDF files from your computer to your eReader when connected via USB."

Bibliography, article indexing, and cross-reference links are included. Related entries, Suggested readings, an MLA source citation and other articles linked by index terms make this an excellent tool for further research.

Content can be "bookmarked" using Gale's Bookmark tool (not the browser) with a durable link for use in a Learning Management System like Blackboard or in a Web page.

IV. USER SUPPORT SERVICES: 3.5, 3
Gale has embedded help throughout the new interface: from its front and center video tutorials to embedded tutorials in the user help menu. The user help menu is based on an expanding tree of contents and is not searchable. There is also a Listen option embedded in the help menu, though there is an accessibility problem (*see Accessibility* below).

Gale offers 24 hour support by telephone at 800-877-4253 #4. Gale also offers free webinars, has a support site at http:// support.gale.com, and provides technical support via email for institutions at gale.technicalsupport@cengage.com. Gale also offers search assistance for participating library staff members 24 hours a day at 800-877-4253 #5.

Gale admin is located at http://admin.galegroup.com. It has been updated with Counter compliant reports, a friendly interface, and just-in-time tutorials such as *How To Run a Report, How To Set Up Monthly Reports, Browser Settings, Usage Reports 101,* etc.

V. COST: 3.5, 3

Gale's pricing is more than reasonable, though one must keep in mind that you may purchase works with missing content. Gale's consortium representatives are easy to work with, and frequently offer sale promotions and volume discounts for the GVRL catalog.

Gale's list price on the ebook collections is higher than what one would pay on average retail for print versions of the same resources. However, this is a reasonable increase as it is for unlimited simultaneous users, comparable to other vendors' single-user vs. multi-user price adjustment.

With Gale's very low hosting fee, the cost of unlimited access and downloads for electronic books shows significant savings over list prices if ebooks were purchased individually. There is no hosting fee for the first year of purchase and there is also a cap on the hosting fee based on number of volumes owned.

However, these are unlimited simultaneous use licenses with unlimited copying, saving, downloading and printing, which is a plus. On the negative, one must keep in mind that a number of articles within a book which are available in print may not be included in some e-versions. This is an important consideration when choosing between purchasing the print or electronic version.

VI. AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE: 4, 4

Students or staff can access GVRL titles from their computer, tablet, and smart phone 24/7. As long as the hosting fee is paid annually, Gale offers unlimited electronic access to your purchased titles. Should the institution cancel its hosting with Gale, content is permanently available on Overdrive, though access is limited there and it is not searchable.

Stripping the style sheet from the search page leaves the viewer with a mostly accessible, text-only version of the interface and its results, which appears to be 508 compliant with alt tags and hierarchal headings. The only detraction is that a screen-reader application will have to sift through the language choices available to get to the results.

Embedded text-to-speech readers allow for listening in a browser or via downloaded MP3s with text taken from the HTML version of the work. Highlight-as-you-read feature works in the HTML version in conjunction with the embedded screen-reader, but not in the PDF versions. Available PDFs are machine readable and accessible to patrons who prefer to use other specialized assistive technology applications and e-Readers.

There is a bug in the interface help menu in that the built-in screen reader only reads the first section selected of the expanded tree, and one must close out help and reopen for each section in order to read the section aloud. This is a bug that would be a non-issue using Kurzweil, JAWS, or another screen reader application. Still, and overall, Gale strives to exceed 508 compliance requirements. They have worked to make GVRL content accessible regardless of location, browser, device, or special software.

Finally, MARC records are available from the vendor to integrate holdings into the OPAC.

VII. OTHER REVIEWS OF THIS PRODUCT

Gale has received accolades in other reviews for GVRL. However, with the exception of the additional comment (Buchwald, 2012) to the CCL-EAR 2008 review, no other reviewer appears to have noted the issue of missing content due to text suppression.

Buchwald, N. (2012). Additional Comment to Virtual Reference Library – Gale (2008): What?! GVRL Text suppression? Retrieved from http://www.cclibraries.org/reviews/2012/05/virtual-reference-library/.

CCL-EAR Committee (2008, May).Virtual Reference Library – Gale [Review of the database GVRL]. Retrieved from http://www.cclibraries.org/reviews/2012/05/virtual-reference-library/.

Gale announces new Virtual Reference Library interface. (2012). *Advanced Technology Libraries 41*.1, 4. Retrieved from http://site.ebrary.com/pub/atl/Top?layout=home

Golderman, G. & Connolly, B. (2010). Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL). *Library Journal135*.17, 106-107. Retrieved from lj.libraryjournal.com/.

Luce, D. L. (2010).Gale Virtual Reference Library. *Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries 48*.4, 648. Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/index.cfm

Sanborn, L. Gale Virtual Reference Library. *Library Journal 137*.2, 92. Retrieved from lj.libraryjournal.com/.

Thornton-Verma, H. (2012). Best databases 2012. *Library Journal (Supplement) 137*.18, 14. Retrieved from lj.libraryjournal.com/.

Title List CCCL GVRL Collections 1-9

TITLE	EBK ISBN	SUBJECT	Active Date
1. 2013 NEW TITLES & EDITIONS - Social Science			
Encyclopedia of Race and Racism, 2nd ed., 3 vols.	9780028661957	Social Science/Sociology	02/08/13
Human Geography: People & Environments, 2 vols.	9781414491387	Social Science/Sociology	03/01/13
Literary Themes for Students: The Individual and Society, 2 vols.	9781414457383	Literature	06/30/13
New Catholic Encyclopedia 2013 Supplement, 4 vols.	9781414482255	Religion & Phenomena	06/14/13
St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture, 2nd ed., 5 vols.	9781558628533	Social Studies	05/17/13
2. 2013 NEW TITLES & EDITIONS - Core			
American Decades Primary Sources: 2000-2009	9781414491394	History	06/14/13
Encyclopedia of Global Brands, 3 vols.	9781558628540	Business	06/04/13
Encyclopedia Of Major Marketing Strategies, Vol. 3	9781414499222	Business	06/14/13
Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia: Extinction, 2 vols.	9781414490700	Sciences	06/14/13
Macmillan Science Library: Computer Science, 2nd ed., 4 vols.	9780028662251	Sciences	06/14/13
3. 2013 NEW TITLES & EDITIONS - Health & Medicine			
The Gale Encyclopedia of Diets, 2nd Edition	9781414498874	Medicine	05/10/13
The Gale Encyclopedia of Environmental Health	9781414498836	Medicine	06/14/13
The Gale Encyclopedia of Nursing and Allied Health, 3rd Edition	9781414498959	Medicine	06/14/13
Gale Encyclopedia of Public Health	9781414498799	Medicine	06/14/13
4. 2013 NEW TITLES & EDITIONS - Literature & Business			
Encyclopedia of Emerging Markets	9781414499246	Business	06/14/13
Gale Business Insights Handbooks, 6 vols.	9781414499321	Business	06/14/13
The Manifesto in Literature, 3 vols.	9781558628809	Literature	06/14/13
Rumors, Ideas and Influence: The Literature of Propaganda, 3 vols.	9781558628786	Literature	06/14/13
Word of Mouth: The Literature of Autobiography, Diaries, and Oral History, 3 vols.	9781558628816	Literature	06/14/13
5. 2012 TITLES & EDITIONS - Literature & Medicine			
Cuba, 2 vols.	9780684316840	History	11/03/11
The Gale Encyclopedia of Fitness, 2 vols.	9781414490199	Medicine	05/01/12
The Gale Encyclopedia of Mental Health, 3rd ed., 2 vols.	9781414490151	Medicine	04/20/12
The Gale Encyclopedia of Neurological Disorders, 2nd ed., 2 vols.	9781414490113	Sciences	02/23/12
The Literature of War, 3 vols.	9781558628458	Literature	05/22/12
Twenty-First Century Drama: The First Decade, 2 vols.	9781414490427	Literature	05/02/12
6. 2012 TITLES & EDITIONS - Business			
Corporate Disasters: What Went Wrong and Why	9781414496153	Business	06/12/12
Encyclopedia of Management, 7th ed.	9781414464336	Business	03/30/12
From Green Industries to Green Jobs	9781414496245	Business	06/11/12
Innovation Masters: History's Best Examples of Business Transformation	9781414496191	Business	06/12/12
Market Share Reporter: Trends Over Time	9781414496214	Business	06/14/12
7. 2012 REMEDIAL, ESL: UXL			
Alternative Energy, 2nd ed., 3 vols.	9781414490816	Sciences	04/19/12
Junior Worldmark Encyclopedia of Foods & Recipes of the World, 2nd ed., 4 vols.	9781414490762	Nation & World	05/04/12
Junior Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations, 6th ed., 10 vols.	9781414490861	Nation & World	06/15/12
Junior Worldmark Encyclopedia of World Cultures, 2nd ed., 9 vols.	9781414486819	Nation & World	09/01/11
Middle East Conflict Reference Library, 2nd ed., 3 vols.	9781414490878	History	05/15/12
UXL American Decades: 2000-2009	9781414491264	History	06/06/12
UXL Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes, 3rd ed., 5 vols.	9781414490984	Social Studies	06/11/12
8. 2010-13 REMEDIAL, ESL: UXL			
African American Eras Library: Contemporary Times, 4 vols.	9781414437040	Social Studies	06/23/10
Bowling, Beatniks, and Bell-Bottoms: Pop Culture of 20th-Century America, 2nd ed.,	9781414411811	History	05/01/12
Chemical Elements, 2nd ed., 3 vols.	9781414476124	Sciences	07/26/10
Experiment Central, 2nd ed., 6 vols.	9781414476209	Sciences	07/16/10
Fashion, Costumes, & Culture: Clothing, Footwear, Hairstyles, Body Decoration, 2nd	9781414498485	Social Studies	06/04/13
Junior Worldmark Encyclopedia of the States, 6th ed., 4 vols.	9781414498645	Nation & World	06/14/13
UXL Complete Health Resource, 2nd ed. 3 vols.	9781414498690	Sciences	06/14/13
UXL Encyclopedia of Biomes, 2nd ed.,3 vols.	9781414444260	Sciences	11/20/08
9. 2012 REMEDIAL, ESL: ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA			
Ancient Civilization, 5 vols.	9781615308170	History	04/13/12
The Britannica Guide to Religion, 2 vols.	9781615308248	Religion & Phenomena	04/18/12
The Britannica Guide to War, 4 vols.	9781615308521	History	04/26/12
Britannica Student Encyclopedia (A-Z Set), 16 vols.	9781615353637	Reference	08/31/12
Computing and Connecting in the 21st Century, 5 vols.	9781615308538	Reference	04/20/12
Documenting America: The Primary Source Documents of a Nation, 4 vols.	9781615308569	History	04/26/12
The Environment: Ours to Save, 5 vols.	9781615308255	Reference	04/18/12
Geology: Landforms, Minerals, and Rocks, 4 vols.	9781615308194	Sciences	04/13/12
The Human Body II, 4 vols.	9781615308583	Sciences	04/26/12
Inside Sports, 4 vols.	9781615308200	Sports/Health/Recreat/Leisure	04/18/12
Introduction to Biology, 7 vols.	9781615308217	Sciences	04/18/12
Introduction to Earth Science, 8 vols.	9781615308224	Sciences	04/18/12
Introduction to Physics, 4 vols.	9781615308576	Sciences	04/26/12
The Solar System, 6 vols.	9781615308262	Sciences	04/20/12
The World of Sports, 4 vols.	9781615308279	Sports/Health/Recreat/Leisure	04/20/12