

## Against the Grain

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# The Affordable Textbook Revolution

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**Does There Need to be ...**  
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projects, classroom discussions, or other activities. Integration like this allows a university to make the most out of their investment in library resources, drive usage of library materials, and improve student outcomes.

One of our **Gale** employees, who also works as a history professor at **Oakland University** in Michigan, ran an experiment in his classroom to test this theory. **Dr. Dale Prentiss** wanted to develop the critical thinking skills of students in his Colonial U.S. History course, which used MindTap for their e-learning platform. He asked students to analyze depictions of Native Americans and to pin the images and their findings on Pinterest. His students were directed from MindTap to **Gale's Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)** archive, which the university had recently acquired.

The results were impressive. Archive usage increased 1000% from the previous semester, sessions increased more than 300%, retrievals went up 474%, searches increased over 200%, and minutes in the product were up over 500%. All of this is great for library usage statistics, but, more importantly, students reported better engagement and better understanding of concepts in their post-course surveys. Feedback like this is so important for administrators and stakeholders to truly understand the direct, positive impact the library has on student outcomes and will go a long way in bridging that gap identified in our survey.

**OER Use by Faculty and the Role of the Library**

All academic institutions are under increasing pressure to show accountability and demonstrate the value they're providing, while also helping to lower the cost of education for students. One area that continues to get a lot of attention is Open Educational Resources

(OER). This is content that is made available under an "open" license for faculty to curate, assemble, and repackage for teaching. This movement presents a unique and important opportunity for libraries, and libraries are becoming more involved in OER initiatives by helping to identify and curate content with faculty.

A recent **Babson** survey<sup>4</sup> on Educational Resources in U.S. Higher Education collected insights from over 3,000 faculty on how they select the educational material they assign in their courses. According to the survey, most higher education faculty are unaware of open educational resources, but those who are aware are interested with some even willing to give such content a try. Survey results show that OER status is not a driving force in the selection of materials with the most significant barrier being the effort required to find and evaluate such materials.

For those faculty who are aware of OER as an option, they see the following barriers:

- "there are not enough resources for my subject" (49%)
- it is "too hard to find what I need" (48%)
- and "there is no comprehensive catalog of resources" (45%).

The survey report goes on to say that faculty comments "reinforce the idea that cost to the student is important, but only after content, relevance, quality, and presentation have been considered. Cost alone is not sufficient to drive the resource selection."

Library content provides an excellent path to lowering student costs while providing peer-reviewed, well-maintained and consistently updated content. Library material can address the difficulties voiced by faculty on finding needed content. One concern we hear from faculty is the time and effort required to maintain content that is sourced from OER repositories. A strong partnership between

library subject and/or instructional experts and faculty can provide students with an excellent set of content, aligned to course objectives, that is purchased by the library rather than the student, thereby meeting the needs of both students and faculty.

**An Opportunity for Libraries to Raise their Profile on Campuses**

A recent **Ithaka** survey<sup>5</sup> found that less than 40% of library directors are actually helping plan curricula at their universities. Thus, there is work to be done to foster more collaboration and communication between librarians and faculty and to elevate the role of the library on campus. **Gale** surely doesn't have all the solutions. But we know there are opportunities to partner with libraries to find new ways to leverage library content, to strengthen the collaboration between faculty and librarians, and most importantly, help libraries empower a better overall learning experience. 🐼

**Endnotes**

1. Gale/Library Journal "Bridging the Librarian-Faculty Gap" Survey report. <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/downloads/2015-bridging-the-librarian-faculty-gap-in-the-academic-library/>
2. Cengage Learning Fall 2015 Engagement Insights Survey. <http://blog.cengage.com/college-students-reveal-where-they-begin-research/>
3. Outsell/Against the Grain End User Survey. <http://www.against-the-grain.com/2014/05/v26-2-outsells-end-user-study-faculty-and-students/#>
4. Babson Survey "Opening the Textbook: Educational Resources in U.S. Higher Education, 2015-16." <http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/openingthetextbook2016.pdf>
5. Ithaka S+R U.S. Library Survey 2013. <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/publications/ithaka-sr-us-library-survey-2013/>

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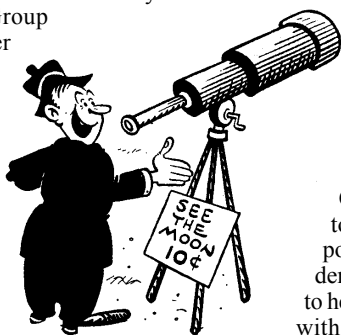
## The Affordable Textbook Revolution

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by **Robert W. Boissy** (Director of Institutional Marketing and Account Development - Americas, Springer Nature; Phone: 781-244-7918) <Robert.Boissy@SpringerNature.Com>

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**T**wo personal events in the Autumn of 2014 led to a turning point for what was at that time **Springer** marketing. The first event was a visit to the Scholarly Communications Interest Group of the New England Chapter of **ACRL**. At that meeting I listened to **Nicole Allen** from **SPARC**, who had for some time previously been involved with Public Interest Research Group activity talk about the negative effects of high textbook costs on student outcomes, with the average textbooks cost per year per student



being \$1200. Shortly after this, my son **James** informed me he had joined the Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG, <http://connpirg.org/home> and <https://www.facebook.com/TrinityConnPIRG/?fref=ts>) at his College (**Trinity College**, Hartford CT) and that their first program was to push the Higher Education Committee of the Connecticut State Legislature to adopt affordable textbook policies. He and his fellow students testified at the state house to help press their point. They met with success and legislation has

been filed. The affordability of textbooks was clearly an issue not to be ignored.

Most librarians I speak with agree that library-owned resources are definitely part of the open education resources (OER) programs they promote. It occurred to me that even though **Springer**, (since 2015 **Springer Nature**), had enjoyed good uptake of their eBook packages, the very nature of package buying might be hiding useful resources from both faculty and library staff. The truth is that, as of spring 2016, **Springer Nature** has over 3100 e-Textbooks included in its contemporary package offerings. It is true that the former **Springer** tended to publish textbooks outside of the Freshman 101 course category, and for this

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reason many people outside and even inside the company did not perceive the company to be a textbook publisher. This too served to hide the many textbooks in the purchased packages.

This article is not an advertisement; it is a cautionary tale for publishers and for librarians. If you sell content in some kind of package, make very sure you spell out the categories of content in that package. If you are selling a package of monographs, a package of reference content, or a package of e-Textbooks, the content will be clear to the buyer. But if you are selling a package that includes encyclopedias, atlases, handbooks, yearbooks, monographs, introductory undergraduate textbooks, advanced undergraduate textbooks, graduate textbooks, etc., you should remind the people making the purchases exactly what they have licensed. At **Springer Nature** we decided to do just that in the spring of 2015.

My then colleague **Sarah Schulman** was asked to create a document that we could send to opt-in faculty members at schools that already had a lot of our eBooks to encourage them to request a list of their e-Textbooks. We call this an account development campaign, as it is designed to increase use of content that is already owned. **Sarah** put together a dynamite promotion, mostly image, limited text, and with a very simple message: Click here to request a list of e-Textbooks already permanently available at your institution. We called it the “affordable textbook revolution.” We ran this campaign in mid-June 2015 to give faculty time to consider these textbooks for their courses in the fall or the following spring. Remarkably, 70% of the schools that received the message responded with at least one faculty member, and sometimes as many as ten faculty members asking for their custom lists. Anyone who markets to faculty knows they are severely stretched for time and highly unresponsive to the normal type of publisher pitch. Getting this level of response showed us that we had clearly touched a nerve. Affordable textbooks were an idea whose time had come. Seeing the result, we ran the campaign again in the fall of 2015 with a different set of schools and with equally good results. We also started to send the custom lists of licensed textbooks to our library contacts to make sure they were aware of our activity in the area in case they got faculty requests as a result of our campaign.

In 2016 we began to understand that affordable textbooks were going to be atypical as a marketing topic. This would not be a limited term effort which is often the norm with a new individual journal or book. Affordable textbooks, fueled by the strong current of the Open Education Resources (OER) movement, were an idea that we would need to keep after and prepare permanent tools to manage. Accordingly, in spring 2016 we sponsored an **ACRL-Choice** Webinar on affordable textbooks to let people know of our support of the OER movement and incidentally to let them know of our new Web page covering affordable textbooks (<https://www.springer.com/gp/librarians/affordable-textbooks>).

The page has a short form to request either a list of all our contemporary textbooks or a custom list of previously licensed textbooks. We then sponsored a second **ACRL-Choice** Webinar showing our support for the Charlotte Initiative, (featured at the **Charleston Conference 2015** and the **ER&L Conference 2016**), with its admonition to sell and buy eBooks in academic settings that have no digital rights management (DRM), unlimited concurrent use, with permanent access. Since **Springer Nature** is the largest eBook publisher in the world and backs these terms, we felt we had a natural ally in the Charlotte Initiative. Six hundred people registered for the Charlotte Initiative Webinar. At the time of this writing 90 librarians from around the world have used the **Springer Nature** affordable textbooks Web page to request lists of e-Textbooks.

There is a phrase that was commonly used when I was growing up in the 1970s — If you’ve got it, flaunt it! And that kind of sums up the experiences described in this article. But this is not just a publisher feel good story. If you go to the library Web page of the **University of North Carolina Charlotte**, you will find their Faculty eTextbook Database (<http://library.uncc.edu/>). I have held this effort up to every librarian I meet as a model. The database contains lists of the e-Textbooks from every publisher from whom they license, arranged for easy browsing and search. The site also features a second function designed for students. It contains a list tagged by faculty name of textbooks adopted for current courses with cover art and links to the full text of the eBooks. Students just need to type in the name of their professor, click on the e-Textbook for their course, download the textbook to their device of choice, and they are ready for their first class. Cost to the student — \$0.00. Of course, we hear from some students and faculty that printed textbooks are easier to study from and provide for better learning and retention. Leaving aside any review of the literature on textbook preferences and learning outcomes, there is a simple way to address this issue: give faculty and students an online and a print option. In the OER movement the call to arms often involves free online resources, but few realistically feel a print counterpart should

necessarily be free as long as it is inexpensive. At my firm at least, library purchased online resources are paired with optional print-on-demand for \$24.99. I often tote a 700-page print textbook to conferences to demonstrate that, once e-Textbooks are licensed by the library, any print-on-demand book or textbook (we call it MyCopy) is just \$24.99 if you feel you need print. This is better than the cost of photocopying, and the quality is excellent.

Reference content is a second issue that requires more visibility. Many librarians think of reference works as something separate and different from other types of purchases. Reference works cost more than monographs, and they are not always sold in a package with monographs and other content. But when significant numbers of reference works are included in package purchases, they can also be overlooked or hidden by the other content in the package. The exact same student needs associated with baseline learning from textbooks are met in the baseline information of reference works. How reference works are made visible and accessible to students in the electronic resource age is a task for academic librarians, but simply knowing what electronic reference works are on license is a start. Publishers can help here.

There was a time when academic libraries in the United States would never buy textbooks or take part in an effort to make textbooks more affordable, but that time has passed. In the rough and tumble discussions of the open access and open education movements, it is easy to forget that most scholarly publishers do attend very closely to the real needs of their readership, including their financial state. Sometimes this means it is necessary to join with libraries and champion causes that seem non-commercial or even anti-commercial. But when an important cause can be met with a considered response that mainly requires visibility and promotion, it should be done. Publishers spend a lot of their marketing budgets on pressing faculty, students, and librarians to buy new things. The era has now arrived when publishers should spend some of their marketing money and time on promoting what has already been bought. It’s simply good account development. 🌱

## Rumors from page 30

Speaking of histories, just learned that **THE ABEL PAPERS** have now been gathered in Special Collections of the **Reed College Library** in Portland, Oregon. Remember when **ATG Press** published **Papa Abel Remembers**? Did you get a copy? If not, let me know because I have a few.

The **Book Industry Study Group (BISG)** has named **John Ingram**, chairman of **Ingram Content Group**, the recipient of its **2016 BISG Award for Excellence**. **Ingram** was recognized for “leading his company and

transforming **Ingram Book Company** into **Ingram Content Group**.” The award was presented at the **BISG Annual Meeting of Members** on September 30 in New York City and also served as a celebration of **BISG’s 40th anniversary**.

<http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/news-brief/index.html?record=989>

Just heard from **Regina Gong**, our industrious Monograph Musings editor for **ATG**. **Regina** tells us in her column introduction that she will be missing **Charleston** this year because she has a new position as **OER (Open Educational Resources) Project Manager at Lansing Community College**. Unfortunately,

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