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Open Access for All: Uniting a University Community

Erin McIntosh
Grand Valley State University, mcintoer@mail.gvsu.edu

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OPEN ACCESS, FOR ALL

Uniting a University Community

ERIN MCINTOSH

GVSU LIBRARY SUMMER SCHOLAR

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How to Use this Document

This document looks at conversations between three different audiences within universities, focusing on student, professor and librarian perspectives when it comes to Open Access. Because conversations regarding Open Access is multifaceted and interdisciplinary, there are many talking points that appeals to different audiences. This document is a guide to discussing Open Access and Open Educational Resources, with important talking points, and a scholarly analysis of the importance of those talking points. This document also ends with a call to action in regard to university administration. While this document is focused on Grand Valley State University practices, it can be applied elsewhere as well.

Section one starts with an important definition of Open Access, providing brief background, setting up a shared foundation of understanding. Then it is a collection of talking points separated into each audience. These talking points can be tailored for individual people, and acts like a jumping off point for further discussion. Each audience can be read and exist separately, or can be read all together.

Section two is also broken up into three audiences and a conclusion. The three audience sections can also be read separately, all together, or any way you find it helpful. It is a scholarly analysis including gathered quotes and statistics and case studies regarding the progress of Open Access.

The conclusion serves as a call to action. The purpose of the conclusion is to motivate many to utilize what they have read into advocacy. The support for Open Access cannot fall onto one section of the university, and the goal of this document is to showcase the importance of a united campus community and start the conversation. These conversations empower students to be self advocates, jump-start professors' conversations within their departments, and welcome all into the library for open discussions.

For the purpose of this document, Open Access may be abbreviated as 'OA' and Open Educational Resources may be abbreviated as 'OER'.

Open Access Advocacy, Talking Points

The Budapest Open Access Initiative, released in 2002 and reaffirmed in 2012, provides recommendations for achieving Open Access goals. Their definition of Open Access is:

"By 'open access' to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited." (2012)

Open Access allows published research to be distributed widely and freely, without the usual cost. Currently, published research is often behind a paywall, allowing those who pay to have access. This barrier of access keeps out members outside universities and developing countries. For university students, the cost of journal articles is paid for by libraries' collections budget, but many libraries are finding it hard to keep up with the inflating cost of journal articles. Open Educational Resources are materials that are created Openly that can be used to facilitate classroom learning, in place of traditional textbooks. When Open Access is paired with the use and creation of Open Educational Resources, implementation of policy can positively impact students at universities for years.

Students:

Tuition and the price paid per semester for textbooks are directly linked to Open Access and the use of Open Educational Resources. Students in higher education are the most affected audience of the rising prices of educational materials. There is potential to lower costs for students when Open publishing is used, beginning the discussion of income inequality within colleges, and lower textbook costs and benefit students internationally. The promotion of Open Access benefits students past their graduation date. It benefits undergraduate researchers, giving more people access to their Openly published research, past their time at Grand Valley State University.

Important points:

- Students have the power to make change. Student advocacy lead to institutionally lower textbook prices at institutions like Grand Rapids Community College and Lansing Community College.
- A student's education relies on the journals and course material they have access to, Open Access allows them to thrive within academia.
- Although the population of undergraduate researchers at Grand Valley is small, it is vastly important, and can greatly benefit from Open publishing. This allows students to spread their Laker Effect past their graduation date.

Professors:

Professors are aware of the rising costs of academic journals and educational materials. Both Open Educational Resources and Open Access publishing are perceived difficulties when professors publish for tenure or promotions, leading many to choose closed publishing methods, over Open ones. The taboo of Open publishing not only limits professors who want to publish Openly, but also impacts students in their classes from fully interacting with the text and other course material. Professors are passionate about learning and research, and their support for Open Access can greatly impact the future of Open Access at Grand Valley.

Important points:

- OER creation not only gives professors an opportunity to write their own course material, but also the potential to work with students to assist them in its creation, potentially in a similar Grand Valley programs like Student Summer Scholars or Modified Student Summer Scholars.
- The growing prices of educational materials leads students to choose what classes to buy textbooks for, sacrificing their grade and interaction in their class.
- Open Access publishing will not grow if professors and researchers do not publish in those journals. Professors choosing Open peer reviewed publishing now, will allow them to help build their credibility, making Open publishers competitive with non-Open publishers.

Librarians:

As a student who has been working with Open Access for almost two years now on our student government body and as a researcher, I have noticed that many journal, books, and text regarding Open Access are published by librarians for librarians. This alienates a student body that can potentially help library faculty in advocacy and promotion of Open Access. The Grand Valley State University Library values inclusion and using inclusive language can bring in other members of the campus community to support Open Access.

Important points:

- The library is the link between professor's efforts in support of Open publishing, and student advocacy for lower textbook prices.
- The library's current knowledge of Open Access can educate the campus community and bring all members together to advocate for positive change on campus.
- An increase in student interaction with Open Access and Open Educational Resource content within the library will greatly benefit promotion and knowledge of current Open Access efforts.

Students: You have the power to change campus

The promotion and future of Open Access lies with the student population at universities across the nation. Open Access is the practice of publication that allows journal articles and educational material to be free to read, reuse, and expanded by others. Open Educational Resources are created to be used in the classroom, frequently are available at low or no cost. Currently, publishers have academic journals behind paywalls. This practice limits students' access to available research. Open Access publishing gives access to journal articles without pay walls, breaking down barriers to knowledge. However, the issue of Open Access does not end with the cost savings for students. It also begins an important conversation regarding wealth inequality, students becoming self-advocates, and engages student researchers and library faculty. Students have the ability to advocate for their own future and combat the rising prices of textbooks.

Grand Valley State University advises students to allocate $740 per academic year for books and supplies. (GVSU MyBanner 2019) Often, students will wait until they receive the syllabus for the course to buy or rent textbooks required for the course. It is also very common for students to forgo purchasing a textbook at all, prioritizing some classes over others. 65% of students decided against buying the required textbook because of the cost, and almost all were aware doing so could impact their grade. (Student PIRGs 2014) This directly interferes with student's ability to fully interact with course material, putting their grade and their ability to fully interact with the course at risk. Academic consequences are often a direct result of limited access to necessary resources that assist the student in succeeding. (Wesolek, Lashley, Langley 2018) This is significant because a student's education relies on what they have access to. Open Access and the use of Open Educational Resources can open worlds of course material for students to interact with. This directly benefits students by combating the rising prices of textbooks and the ability to thrive in higher education should not be decided by textbook costs.

Students have the ability to make change in their campus community. Students advocating for the betterment of the campus community can greatly benefit those who come after them. Self-advocacy, and advocacy for others, are skills that can benefit students professionally after they have left university. The costs for textbooks are directly impacting many students to get the full privilege of secondary education. GVSU states in their Strategic Plan in their Mission Statement says: "Grand Valley State University educates students to shape their lives, their professions, and their societies. The university contributes to the enrichment of society through excellent teaching, active scholarship, and public service." (2016) Open Access directly aligns with the mission statement that GVSU prides itself on. Grand Valley's rhetoric of support for student success and impacting society, therefore student's advocating for sustainable Open Access policy and change will support GVSU's mission statement, furthering the university and its students.

Open Access, in regard to income inequality, also discusses privilege. Education is treated as a privilege that only a small percentage of the population has access to, "For many in

academia, life experiences of formal education have been extremely privileged…We are all well within the estimated 5% or less of the world's population with access to postsecondary education." (Phelam 2012) The rapidly increasing price of educational materials directly impacts students in higher education. Given economic challenges many students face, especially first-generation college students, the most immediate benefit of adopting Open Educational Resources are the cost savings. (Wesolek, Lashley, Langley 2018) Grand Valley's population of first-generation college students reached 36.5% in Fall 2018, an estimated 9,020 students. (GVSU, Office of Institutional Analysis 2018) Cost savings from the utilization of Open Access policy would impact all student, not just first-generation college student or Pell Grant recipients that attend Grand Valley. A student cannot fully succeed in a course if they are unable to interact with course material. Student testimony of their experiences purchasing textbooks is a powerful tool in self-advocacy for change within the university.

Many sources state how important the voice of students is in the success of OA and ORE implementation. Letting other members of the university community know that this is something you care about can have a significant impact on Open Access policy and talking to other students and peers about this topic can have impact on student advocacy. Using your voice to start the conversation with professors and librarians and other students can unite members of campus against rising textbook prices. High textbook prices hurt every college student, whether they pay out of pocket, with a scholarship, or with loans. Students are able to build connections campus wide and this is a powerful voice for Open Access policy advocacy.

Professors: Students need your help

The largest factor in Open Educational Resource adoption is how faculty utilize and choose their textbooks. Investment in OER and employing Open Access resources in class benefits both professors and their students. Gaines says, "The majority of respondents [professors] (80%) felt it was important that the general public could access and read their research, yet only 44% preferred to publish in open access journals." (Gaines 2015, 9) Without professor involvement, it is difficult to grow support for Open Access journals. New knowledge is built by synthesizing existing scholarship and scholarly work. Professors assisting in the spread of knowledge and building upon scholarly work can thrive within Open Access policy.

Professors are the key decision makers when it comes to textbook selection. The prices of these materials, however, directly impacts students. The ability to purchase the required text for a class has a great influence on a student's success or failure in a course. Although professors seem to agree on the benefits of Open Access, many do not want to change to Open publishing practices. (Gaines 2015) Author Annie Gaines writes, "overall faculty perception of open access publishing: fairly positive, yet with significant reservations about the quality of peer review and the effect open access publishing may have on their careers." (Gaines 2015, 31) Open Access and the use of Open Educational Materials has large benefits for student engagement with course material, yet there is a lack of sustainable change when it comes to changing to Open publishing practices. Open Access usage gaining traction among teaching faculty is crucial, impacting students and publishing trends. Open Access journals will not be able to gain strength and publicity unless people publish and peer review articles. Professors looking at ways to publish Openly and interact with students can be beneficial to Open journals gaining credibility.

At Grand Valley, the Student Summer Scholars program (S3), and the Modified Student Summer Scholars program (MS3) directly allows faculty mentors to do research with students. These programs makes for a direct path for undergraduate students to publish their findings Openly through GVSU's OpenStax. Many schools with successful Open publishing initiatives rely heavily on faculty stipend programs. Because Grand Valley does not have a faculty stipend program that has been successful at other schools for OA specific publishing, S3 and MS3 are similar programs that have structure and popularity. Programs like these unite professors and students working together, allows both parties to get paid for their research, produces a research project that can be published Openly at the end of the program. These programs are set up to, "offer a unique opportunity for undergraduate students to do hands-on, professional research and creative practice… Combining academics, field work, and a reflection component provides students with a meaningful learning experience that helps to prepare them for graduate school and future careers." (GVSU OURS Summer Scholars Programs) Student and faculty involvement in mentorship and Open publishing will help affordable textbook choices and research success at Grand Valley. The advantage of Open Access can be found in many, if not all disciplines, with increasing the use of research by 25%-250%. (Harnad 2007) Research is not

just for science fields anymore, and more students involved in publishing Open will facilitate the growth of research and reach of undergraduate research.

Conversations of Open Access discuss an important angle of income inequality within colleges. Sarah Crissinger, an author published on *In the Library with a Lead Pipe,* an Open Access journal, writes: "The price of textbooks has increased 812 percent between 1978 and 2012 and this phenomenon affects students' ability to engage in class in very real ways. Increasing access to educational materials, especially to students of lower socioeconomic status, is important work." (Crissinger 2015) The outrageous cost of textbooks has forced many to take out more loans, apply for textbook specific scholarships, search online for the best price, or decide to not purchase the textbook at all, risking their grade. Further, library collection budgets vary from university to university, giving students at different institutions a varying range of research published in journals. The issue of money buying access to journals is significant because, "in order to be fully used, applied, and built upon, research needs to be accessible to all its potential users. Not only to those that can afford access to the journals in which the research happens to be published." (Harnad 2007, 1) These two points highlight the income inequality among college students, and resources used by their University Library's Collection budget. Student sacrificing their grades because of a cost barrier should not be acceptable, but professors need to advocate for change through action. Through professor's ability to enact change within their departments and their colleagues, they can impact student's ability to interact with educational materials and textbook affordability.

Professors taking the leap to invest in OA and OER can not only save students money, but break down the culture of assigning expensive textbooks, and making access to teaching materials equitable regardless of economic background. At Grand Valley, utilization of Open publishing in programs like S3 and MS3 are a gateway to students discussing sharing their research Openly. Professors taking this stand regarding the rising cost to students can have a large impact on the success of Open Access implementation and OER creation. Professors should want their students to be fully engaged in classes, and if they are not able to purchase the textbook, that barrier puts their grade at risk. Professors advocating for Open Access by utilizing Openly published and creating or using OER will impact students greatly. Open Access is a solution to the pay-per-view publishing style that currently dominates universities.

Librarians: Educate your campus community

The Grand Valley State University Mary Idema Pew Library is the heart of the Allendale campus. The GVSU Libraries provides amazing services for students and professors, and is a meeting place for many students. However, libraries are not immune to campus wide budget cuts. The GVSU Libraries are using cost saving measures to discontinue parts of their collections budget to slim down duplicates and low usage texts. Sources agree, "it is not realistic to anticipate that librarians who work at institutions with limited resources will be able to educate the next generation of researchers." (Keane 2012, 347) Library faculty and staff know of Open Access well, pushing for professors to use OER in classrooms and promoting Open Access journals. *OER: A Field Guide for Academic Librarians* discusses potential combination or integration of library services resulting in more enriching initiatives to promote various institutional infrastructure. (Wesolek, Lashley, Langley 2018) That integration can foster valuable relationships between librarians and students, where creation of Open Educational Resources and Open Access advocacy starts.

Many sources regarding OA and OER are written by academic librarians for other academic librarians. Many of those sources also include the importance of student voices, but there was little sources written specifically for students. Journal article titled "Librarian Viewpoints on Teaching Open Access Publishing Principles to College Students" says, "while there have been many articles published on library initiatives to promote OA to teaching faculty outside the library, there has been comparatively little written regarding academic librarians working with students." (Keane 2012, 335) Grand Valley State University Student Senate has been a loud advocate for Open Access promotion, and took part in a taskforce comprising of academic librarians, the Dean of the University Libraries, professors who have created OER and have been published Openly, and members from the Educational Affairs committee of Student Senate. This Taskforce focused on potential policy and advocacy angels, ending with a report sent to the University Academic Senate, urging other faculty committees to begin conversations regarding Open Access to best serve the university community. Grand Valley does not have a faculty stipend program for Open publishing but makes strides to interact with students regarding Open policy. Building on that momentum is where the library comes in, to continue conversations with professors and students.

Inclusion and equity frequently goes hand-in-hand with Library services, supplying accessible readings, study help, and a welcoming environment for anyone to use and learn in. The article "Measuring Altruistic Impact: A Model for Understanding the Social Justice of Open Access" discusses how Open Access is able to provide social inclusion and open up more possibilities for people outside of the academy to access academic discourse. The source states, "We argue that participating in open access is a critical part of preserving the public sphere, and that we, as librarians, must build and assess our open access initiatives with the understanding that they are a vital public and social good." (Heller, Gaede 2016) This significant quote highlights the public good aspect of Open Access, and a librarian's duty to build Open

initiatives, but for years, librarians have fought that fight alone. Students and professors are amazing allies, and their voice in ongoing advocacy is valuable. Sarah Crissinger, author of a critical piece regarding Open Access says, "The first [initiative] is by incorporating the tenets of open pedagogy into library instruction sessions. The second is by using student OER creation as a springboard for important conversations about knowledge production." (Crissinger 2015) Library instruction sessions already exist at Grand Valley, with the help of liaison librarians, students are taught library resources and library databases. Student education on Open materials can skyrocket through programs like that, as well as the S3 and MS3 scholar programs. Both points Crissinger makes in the above quote can bring in members of teaching faculty and students into current library efforts for Open Access and OER advocacy.

The Library has a unique position as a partner to students rather than presenting the library as a service offered to students. Students are hard workers and discussing the facts and possibilities of Open Access can assist librarians in advocacy. The GVSU Libraries have worked with students and professors to advocate and push for Open Access policy through the Student Senate taskforce. This is only the beginning of library partnerships with different members of the university. Success of Open Access and OER at universities hinges on cooperation and advocacy within members of the university, and the library is how we get there, utilizing their knowledge to educate and advocate.

Conclusion: What next

Grand Valley has a shared mission and values of student success and a student-centered liberal education. It prides itself with being unique and setting trends within Michigan universities. Open Access and OER creation are ways universities can set trends to institutionally lower textbook costs. However, there is a difference in reading this paper and thinking Open Access is a good idea, to advocating for policy change. The current system of publishing perpetuates inaction with 'what if's regarding the peer review process and credibility of the journals. This system is allowed to thrive by those within universities, not just publishers. Professors and administrators, with student assistance, have the ability to enact change but one group cannot do it on their own.

Openly published work is valuable, and Grand Valley has the potential to make waves throughout public universities by adopting Open Access practices. Community colleges like Lansing Community College and Grand Rapids Community College have has wide success with changing to regular OER and OA use. However, "most institutions appear to be more concerned with the technicalities of publishing OER and how OER may help their teachers [professors/faculty] and students than with the scope of OER to help with either access as in reach or access as out-reach." (Conole 2012, 132) Open doesn't just end with the university that adopts sustainable policy, it also increases access to education. It reduces the rising cost of education in developing countries, allowing them to have access to recent research without a pay wall.

Open Access and OER policy adoption impacts multiple members of universities, not just the ones discussed in this document, and it's important to note, "the relationship between OER and social inclusion/exclusion is particularly valuable, given the underpinning philosophy associated with the OER movement in terms of widening participation and the assumption that education is a right that should be freely accessible for all." (Conole 2012, 134) Universities should strive to be inclusive spaces for learning and always evolving to accommodate a changing society. Administrator backed enhancements in policy and adoption of sustainable progress are ways to adapt to society and success in our institution. Sarah Crissinger also sites how OER is important in widening access to learning opportunities and enhances the public education system. The spread of education and learning remains the core foundation for equal and equitable education for all.

Open Education Resources and Open Access publishing are some of many strategies that can help reach student success goals, higher retention rates, higher graduation rates. These are both areas where almost all universities in Michigan are being challenged right now and taking further steps to ensure growth can combat lower enrollment numbers. Discussions of Open Access adoption discusses income inequality and an acknowledges of a pay-per-view system only some can afford. That privilege we hold over people who are not in university have the same right to information that we do. Grand Valley has the ability to continue their fight for

equity, promote undergraduate research, and value student success through Open Access. Students, professors and library faculty have the amazing opportunity to unite in conversation and advocacy for a better system for all. Open Access and Open Educational Resources are not just about saving students money. It's a multifaced, interdisciplinary issue that can change the future of research, publication, and information sharing for the greater good of the campus community.

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