

Talkin' 'Bout OER

AUDIENCES:

How would you explain Open Educational Resources (OER) to these groups? How can you talk about the benefits of using OERs?

- [Administrators \(Department Chairs/College Deans\)](#)
- [Faculty \(Fine Arts and Humanities\)](#)
- [Faculty \(STEM and Social Sciences\)](#)
- [Graduate Students \(As TAs/instructors\)](#)
- [Graduate Students \(Involved in student organizations\)](#)
- [Undergraduates \(Involved in student organizations\)](#)

ADMINISTRATORS (DEPARTMENT CHAIRS/COLLEGE DEANS)

Benefits of creating and adopting OER

- Studies show using OER produces equal or improved student learning outcomes compared to traditional textbooks¹
- Many OER repositories use peer-review and ratings to ensure quality control and aid in selection
- Ability to remix and share resources - customizing them for accessibility needs or universal design for learning
- There are a greater number and variety of resources available
- Usually more authors contributing and giving different perspectives (as opposed to only 1-3 authors with limited perspectives)
- There is movement at the state and national level to increase the adoption of OER²
- Opportunity to educate faculty and student body on licensing, copyright, and publishing models of digital materials.
- Students can participate in OER development, which can be a motivating activity and a way to make learning more student-centered and autonomous

Drawbacks of traditional textbooks

- The cost of traditional textbooks can be a barrier for students³

¹ <https://openedgroup.org/review>

² <https://capitol.texas.gov/billlookup/Text.aspx?LegSess=85R&Bill=SB810>, and <https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2018/07/30/department-education-sets-september-date-one-three-oer-grants-5>

³ <https://studentpirgs.org/sites/student/files/reports/National%20-%20COVERING%20THE%20COST.pdf>,

- Anecdotal data from student stories of the hardships of textbook costs
- Textbooks can become outdated quickly and, depending on the subject, do not always represent diverse experiences and viewpoints

Incentives for faculty to create or adopt OER

- Monetary rewards for departments who devote time and resources to OER adoption or creation
- Grant and stipend opportunities for faculty to devote time to OERs
- Opportunity for tenured faculty to publish nontraditional materials
- Add OER creation/adoption to promotion and tenure guidelines

Sample language for outreach email

Open educational resources (OER) offer the University an opportunity to reduce costs for students while promoting innovative teaching and equal or improved student learning outcomes. In large introductory level courses, for which several quality open textbooks exist, the cost savings to students could be thousands of dollars in just one semester. Any investment from the university, in the form of grants or stipends to adopt or create OER, would be easily surpassed by cost savings for students. Instructors would not be limited by copyright and would have the freedom to customize the resources for their individual courses. Finally, state and national legislation is prioritizing the use of open educational resources.

FACULTY (FINE ARTS AND HUMANITIES)

Pedagogical benefits of creating and adopting OER

- OERs, images for example, offer the opportunity to supplement content available in course materials, some of which can be viewed via platforms that offer [IIIF](#) viewer options (close up on brush strokes, layering, techniques, etc.)
- Provides access to content (especially images) that may not be available through UT subscriptions
- Faculty can be creative in their use of materials and students can help remix OERs for classes
- Students do as well or better with OER textbooks and courseware¹; and they'll definitely do better if they actually HAVE the course materials. Often when textbooks are expensive, students don't buy them.
- Opportunities for critical pedagogy that makes space for marginalized/oppressed voices that may not be included in mainstream texts.

Financial benefits of creating and adopting OER

- Money, especially for art history, and other areas with expensive texts
- Possibility for grants and honoraria

- Faculty reputation - sharing materials to gain reputation in a discipline in terms of teaching

Sample language for outreach email

Many humanities and fine arts faculty may assume that textbook costs are not a pressing issue because they often post readings to course management sites and require cheaper books like novels. However, in art history and literature survey classes, expensive textbooks are still the norm. (The latest edition of *Gardener's Art Through the Ages* sells for \$230⁴, and *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Vol. A-E* sells for \$150⁵). There is a creative solution to this problem (beyond just uploading PDFs to Canvas) -- Open Educational Resources (OERs). OERs offer attractive opportunities for instructors looking to shake up their courses and experiment with course design and pedagogy. Dr. Robin DeRosa of Plymouth State University created an OER anthology for her early American literature survey course, which featured literary works in the public domain.⁶ Dr. DeRosa initially chose the OER model because she didn't want her students to pay for texts that were already freely available. But by using an OER anthology, she opened up her course in other ways. Students wrote introductions for the texts, created short films, and developed discussion questions and assignments, which lead them to be more engaged and exciting about the textbook.⁷ It's this potential for students' increased investment in course content that makes OER exciting for humanities and fine arts faculty!

FACULTY (STEM AND SOCIAL SCIENCES)

Pedagogical benefits of creating and adopting OER

- Expand access to information -- if students are struggling, give OER alternatives to address multiple learning methods.
 - Example: Anatomy course lab manual -- no access to specimens, so how do we give students equivalent experience to specimen dissection?
 - Access to case studies
 - Video, audio, and other multimedia materials
- Use and connect existing campus resources from tutoring offices, departments, etc.
- Students have access to the required texts from day one

Financial benefits of creating and adopting OER

- Save students money and ensure that they can access materials

⁴ https://www.amazon.com/Gardners-Art-Through-Ages-History/dp/1337630705/ref=dp_ob_title_bk

⁵ <https://www.amazon.com/Norton-Anthology-American-Literature-Package/dp/0393264556/>

⁶ <https://openamlit.pressbooks.com/>

⁷ <https://robinderosa.net/uncategorized/my-open-textbook-pedagogy-and-practice/>

Professional Incentives for creating and adopting OER

- Share authoritative materials across institutions for use by other students and faculty
- Create connections in the department or university around OER creation
- Creating OER can be a form of scientific communication to possibly fulfill grant obligations

Sample language for outreach email

Between 1977 and 2015, the cost of college textbooks rose by 1,041% according to an NBC News article using Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data.⁸ One major influencing factor in this rise in recent years is the way in which textbook publishers bundle access codes for online supplemental instructional materials.⁹ Open Educational Resources (OERs) and other no-cost or low-cost solutions can reduce the cost of college for all students. Imagine your students not having to pay \$1,200 a year for their textbooks.¹⁰ Even for students without limited means, this is a significant amount. In addition, OERs can also give instructors more flexibility over the content of their courses than following a traditional standard textbook. They can be used to supplement a standard course textbook with additional materials that offer different perspectives on a topic or additional homework problems that aren't locked behind a paywall.

GRADUATE STUDENTS (TAs/INSTRUCTORS)

Benefits of creating and adopting OER

- Can create materials that they can feature in their teaching portfolio/CV/job interviews to highlight their readiness for faculty positions or K12 teaching
- Creating OER together can be a good opportunity to collaborate with fellow grad students, undergraduate students, and faculty
- Free for students
- OER can supplement existing teaching materials (for example with videos, case studies, or images)
- OER can be modified and remixed to fit the needs of a specific group of students - this can be especially useful for accessibility issues or to accommodate different learning preferences
- Help others by sharing OER you've made or found
- Multiple viewpoints and perspectives to share with students
- Reviews and ratings available for quality control

⁸ <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/freshman-year/college-textbook-prices-have-risen-812-percent-1978-n399926>

⁹ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/whats-behind-the-soaring-cost-of-college-textbooks/>

¹⁰ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/whats-behind-the-soaring-cost-of-college-textbooks/> "Over the course of a year, the average college student spends more than **\$1,200** on books and materials, according to the College Board."

- Student learning outcomes are equal or improved when using OER¹
- Free for students

Sample language for outreach email

[In a 2014 study](#), 65% of all respondents said that they had decided against buying a textbook because it was too expensive. If you want to save your students money and are looking for a textbook or supplements that address what you are teaching in a more comprehensive or engaging way, you may want to consider Open Educational Resources (OER). OER will allow you to supplement your existing materials, and creating your own OER is a way to demonstrate your teaching experience, creativity, and initiative to potential employers. You can even add it to your teaching portfolio. If you don't have much autonomy in choosing your materials, you could try talking to your department about OER.

Student PIRGs provide useful research and information on making textbooks more affordable: <https://studentpirgs.org/campaigns/sp/make-textbooks-affordable>.

GRADUATE STUDENTS (INVOLVED IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS)

Benefits of advocacy through student organizations

- Cost savings for fellow students across disciplines
- Materials created for courses can be included in teaching portfolio and on CVs
- Creating and sharing OER can increase professional visibility and impact
- Using open pedagogy can increase student engagement and critical thinking

Benefits for learning and skill development

- Develop critical thinking and evaluation skills while evaluating materials

Sample language for outreach email

If you have ever decided to forgo buying a book assigned for class because of high prices, you are not alone. [In a 2014 study](#), 65% of all respondents said that they had decided against buying a textbook because it was too expensive. If you feel comfortable talking to your professors about options and alternatives for class readings, they may be interested in hearing your perspective. Or better yet, work with your student organization to create a platform for the discussion of textbook affordability on campus. Check out [#textbookbroke](#) to find other students and organizations who are talking about this problem.

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UNDERGRADUATES (INVOLVED IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS)

Benefits of advocacy through student organizations

- Advocate for no cost or reduced textbook and resource costs
- Convenience factor of digital class materials
- OER provides equal access to education for all students (who have access to computers, internet)
- Platform for educating student body on licensing, copyright, and publishing models of digital materials.
- Allows for diversity of voices and perspectives

Benefits in coursework

- Low to no cost materials for a class - equitable access
- Convenience of digital access
- Differing viewpoints and a variety of material to review
- Develop critical thinking skills to evaluate materials

Sample language for outreach email

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