No Textbook – No Problem: OER is the Answer!

*“The book you don’t read won’t help.” - Jim Rohn*

Students do not buy a textbook for a number of reasons ranging from high costs to prior poor experiences, where some instructors do not make use of the text or replicate the text in their lectures making the textbook obsolete. There is a direct correlation between the use of Open Education Resources (OER) and course completion, class achievement (grades) and enrollment intensity (Fischer, Hilton, Robinson, & Wiley, 2015). OER used to supplement or replace an expensive textbook can lead to higher student engagement and improve student learning. Faculty who are dissatisfied with the traditional textbooks or want to decrease barriers of student degree completion [invest their time and energy into learning more about OER](https://www.edsurge.com/news/2018-05-16-where-are-all-the-faculty-in-the-open-education-movement). The realm of OER is broad and could be rather confusing as you get started.

Don’t Recreate – Reuse

Explore existing resources before you decide to create your own. You can [use Google, search discipline specific sites, and OER repositories](https://www.cccoer.org/learn/find-oer/). You may even be able to find a full OER textbook! Do not get discouraged when you cannot find a textbook – you may have to go unit by unit and replace a textbook chapter by chapter with several OER resources. This will allow you to refresh and renew your course: you might be able to locate resources that are current and will help students grasp complex topics.

Start Small

If you are not ready to completely eliminate an expensive textbook you may want to supplement your weekly readings with additional resources. Those resources could be OER or other resources that are free to students (library database subscriptions, [video repository subscriptions](https://www.kanopy.com/), etc.). You can start by eliminating a chapter or two and test things out – ask students for feedback about learning materials when you replace the textbook reading.

Less is More

Offer several (one to three) additional resources when supplementing or replacing a textbook reading. Be mindful to not give a one-page list for each unit. When conflicted which resources to include – revisit the unit’s learning outcomes to guide your decision-making process. If the list of resources is getting long – categorize it and let students choose one resource from each category.

Engage Your Students

Rather than providing all learning materials to your students engage them in a learning journey. Create an activity for your students to search, evaluate and present their OER findings on a specific topic; have students make connections with the textbook reading or other unit specific resources.

Find Support!

Find out whether you have an OER librarian or if you have an Office of Innovative Pedagogies or a Center for Teaching and Learning that supports OER initiatives on your campus. Ask your colleagues, see if anyone in your department already does not use a textbook or find a colleague to collaborate with on redesigning a course to replace a textbook with OER or free-for-students resources.

Resources

Open Education Consortium <http://www.oeconsortium.org/>

CUNY OER Workshop to Steal <https://oerworkshop.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>

Cengage OER Podcast [https://www.cengage.com/oer#podcast](https://www.cengage.com/oer)

Open NYS <http://www.open-nys.org/>

References

Fischer, L., Hilton, J., Robinson, T. J., & Wiley, D. A. (December 01, 2015). A multi-institutional study of the impact of open textbook adoption on the learning outcomes of post-secondary students. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education: Research & Integration of Instructional Technology, 27,*3, 159-172.

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