
Marilyn S Billings, University of Massachusetts Amherst
Seeking Alternatives to High-cost Textbooks: The UMass Amherst Example

Affordable Learning Georgia webinar
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Marilyn Billings, Scholarly Communication Librarian
University of Massachusetts Amherst
The high cost of commercial print textbooks is a major concern for parents, students, and even the federal government.
Goals of Open Education Initiative

- To provide small incentive grants to faculty to adopt alternatives to high-cost textbooks
  - Funded by Provost and University Libraries

- To provide support infrastructure for creation and/or use of open educational resources and library content

- To engage T & L partners with faculty in open education
  - Academic Computing
  - Center for Teaching and Faculty Development
  - University Libraries
Open Education Initiative beginnings

**February 2011:** SPARC initiates topic with call about e-text project at Temple, and the Flat World Knowledge model.

**March 2011:** Director of UMass Libraries and Provost establish a fund of $10,000 for open education initiative grants.

**March 2011:** The University Libraries Open Educational Resources LibGuide is created. 
[http://guides.library.umass.edu/oer](http://guides.library.umass.edu/oer)

**March 2011:** Workshops held for librarians and partners to learn about OERs.

**April 2011:** Round one of the Open Education Initiative begins.

**April 2011:** Workshops, consultation sessions held for faculty.
Workshop & Consultation Process

• Two 1 hour workshops reviewing available Open Educational Resources and library resources
• Individual consulting sessions for faculty with Scholarly Communication librarians, liaisons, and partners as needed
• Topics covered: OER availability, copyright and licensing issues, accessibility concerns, creating a sustainable curriculum with OERs, managing resources in the LMS
What are Open Educational Resources (OER)?

Open Educational Resources are educational materials and resources offered freely and openly for anyone to use and under some licenses to re-mix, improve and redistribute. They include:

- Textbooks
- Course materials
- Images
- Videos
- Assignments
- Exams
- Online platforms
- Learning management systems
- Online courses

These resources can be used by educators, students, and anyone else for teaching, learning, and research.

The use of OER can help reduce the costs associated with traditional textbooks and other educational materials. It also allows educators to customize and adapt resources to meet the specific needs of their students.

OER can also help alleviate the digital divide, as resources can be accessed from anywhere with an internet connection.

In addition, the use of OER can contribute to a more equitable education system, as it provides access to high-quality educational resources for people who may not be able to afford traditional textbooks or other educational materials.
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OEI Grant: Faculty Proposals

- Basic course information
  - Number of students
  - Current textbook(s) and cost
- Anticipated implementation date
- Narrative (500 words)
  - Outcomes
  - Sustainability
  - Challenges
  - Assessment

The current application form can be seen at http://goo.gl/forms/NRH9IQTF2L
Partners Providing OEI Support

Peer-Review by:
CTFD
IT Program faculty
Librarians
OIT

Consultation with partners prior to award

Faculty Award Letter

Hi John Q. Professor,

Congratulations! I am very pleased to let you know that you have been selected as one of the winners of an OEI grant for your proposal NANO-SCI 999RL, NCR 999RL. Your official congratulations letter from the Provost and Director of Libraries with more details will be coming through the mail in a couple of weeks.

If you’d like to get started with your course preparation during intersession, I encourage you to be in touch with your librarian liaisons, Naka Ishii or Maxine Schmidt, Mei Shih in the Center for Teaching and Faculty Development, Matt Sheridan in the Scholarly Communication Office, or one of the rest of the team copied on this email.

Thank you for your interest in this new initiative,

Marcy

Center for TEACHING & FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

UMass Amherst Libraries
Library at Work

**Workshops**
- Copyright & licensing (Creative Commons)
- Accessibility & sustainability

**Consulting**
- Liaison outreach to faculty
- Finding resources
- Creating new content, applying metadata

**Access to Resources**
- Liaisons, Circulation and E reserves for library materials
- Licensing materials for class use

**Partners**
- Center for Teaching & Faculty Development
- OIT Academic Computing
- Center for Educational Software Development
# Assessment

## Methods
- Surveys
- Qualitative interviews
- Focus groups
- Enrollment numbers
- Work with Institutional Research Office

## Objectives
- Was there a cost savings?
- Did students learn effectively?
- Did faculty implement the parameters of the grant?

Use results for improvement and marketing.
Faculty Survey Results

On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest

- My teaching needs were met by the Open Educational Resources implemented in the course. (4.27)

- Student performance improved compared to past semesters when a traditional textbook was used. (4.36)

- Student engagement increased compared to past semesters when a traditional textbook was used. (4.09)
Faculty Comments

• The students are much more satisfied with the new materials; they are more engaged and more prepared than I have ever seen them.
• I know that the students have access to textbooks on Day 1.
• Grades have improved drastically since using [Open Educational Resources] in my course ... the support from the Libraries was outstanding.
• My students are reading more, they are much more organized, and they are happy that they no longer need to spend so much money on materials.
• I was highly satisfied with the resources provided by the Libraries, as are my students.
• I received excellent technical support from the Libraries.
Lessons Learned: What Worked

- Value of mini grants and peer review
- Meet faculty where they are – create cohorts
- Capitalize on library strengths and value of existing services
- Articulate value of existing library services
- Leverage complementary strengths of the partners
And What Didn’t, or “Challenges”

• Lack of knowledge by faculty
• Time consuming to find or develop OE content
• May lack prepared quizzes and other content
• Students may prefer print
Dollar Savings to Students

- Predicted savings (# of students x expected text cost) each round 2011-2014
Resources

• Babson Survey Research Group Report 2014
  http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/oer.html

• Horizon Report 2015

• Open Textbooks: The Billion-Dollar Solution