

Transcript for Teaching Talk #7: Old Ways Won't Work for "the New Normal"

Aron Fazekas: Good afternoon everyone, my name is Aron Fazekas and I'm an educational developer with the Office of Teaching and Learning.

Today, I want to start off by acknowledging that we are all living in various places that are governed by different treaties and relationships to the land. Particularly now, with the social issues that we are experiencing I think it's important to remember our collective responsibilities to each other and consider how we enact inconclusion and respect in our daily lives and actions. There are a few housekeeping items before we get started. The webinar today is being recorded and a link will be provided later, in a couple of days. Our session is organized in a way that allows our panelists to have about 20 minutes or so for their presentation and after that, we'll have half an hour for a question and answer period from the attendees. So, Shehroze, do you want to explain how the chat function works?

Shehroze Saharan: Absolutely. Hello everyone, you can see in the bottom right-hand side of your screen, in the chat box, there should be a message pop up there. You'll see instructions in case you ever need to refer to that again during this webinar. But, just a couple of things to remember: you will notice that coming into this webinar your audio and video is off and it will remain off for the duration of the session. So, in other words and the chat box has also been disabled and to ask questions you will notice a Q&A tab at the bottom of your screen in the ribbon. And, that is how you can ask those questions and then we will direct those to the panelists during the Q&A section. And, as always please stay respectful and ask some questions and I will hand it over to our first panelist.

Heather Martin: Hi, thanks I hope every (audio error). Sorry hang on I'm trying to advance through my slides. Hello, I'm Heather Martin, the manager of e-Learning course reserves at the University of Guelph library. I'm also the Copyright Officer for the university and presenting with me is my colleague:

Ali Versluis: Ali Versluis. I'm a research and scholarship librarian also at McLaughlin library and I'm the OER lead there.



Heather Martin: So, the first thing we're going to do is a quick poll. We would like to know who's in the room and what your sort of background or interest is in our webinar. So, you want to go ahead and participate by letting us know who you are. That would be great. We have two questions (receiving questions). Great. And, the second question (receiving questions). Great, thanks for participating this is really helpful to us as we do our presentation. So, we're here to talk to you today about student access to course materials and how traditional models of content delivery may not work so well in the new normal and one of the things that we want to talk about is how OER or Open Educational Resources are finding a solution to some of the problems that we are seeing. So current models of course delivery assume that students are on campus and they also assume that students generally have purchased their own copies of required textbooks or other course material, specifically for courses where they do have assigned required texts. So, one of the things that we did in the library; we started to be curious early on; as early as 2016, even before that, about whether or not students actually were purchasing copies of their required textbooks for their courses and so we partnered with the Central Students Association in the fall of 2016 to do an undergrad survey and we asked students whether they purchase textbooks. If they didn't purchase textbooks, how are they managing without one, what were the impacts of not having a textbook if they didn't purchase one, and we also wanted to get a sense of whether or not there was anything that the library could do regarding the challenges students were facing with respect to textbooks. We had an overwhelming response rate to the survey; more than 4,600 students thousands of written comments. Some of the more interesting results that we found were that 56% of students reported they didn't purchase all the required textbooks. 37% were using the library's copy instead of purchasing in their own. 24% either shared a copy with a friend or borrowed a copy from a friend and 38 percent reported that they didn't use a textbook at all. (Audio error) Students who didn't purchase their textbooks reported negative consequences in terms of academic success, learning outcomes and their overall university experience. (Audio error) -reported that it was very stressful to not have the required textbook for a course, and the library wanted to respond to this. We changed several aspects. One of the things that we did was to launch a textbook purchasing program for course reserves. So, our plan was to make at least a single copy of all required textbooks for all undergraduate courses, where feasible, available on course reserves so that students that didn't purchase the textbook had a means of accessing the content.

Our first choice was to buy an e-book with unlimited access. We found that in many cases we were only able to purchase the hardcopy. And, of course the hardcopy without an access code because access codes are intended for individual use and so we weren't able to provide access to ancillary material that came with these resources as well. The other thing that we found very quickly is that a single copy for a lot of courses on course reserve was insufficient to meet the kind of demand that we had. So, looking forward to fall 2020 and the new normal what we're facing is that most courses will be online. Most students won't be physically on campus. We suspect that students will be even less likely to purchase textbooks due to financial pressures of the current situation, not having a job over the summer in some cases.



Heather Martin: The print copies that we make available through the library textbook program won't help students if they're not on campus they won't be able to access them and so students will be seeking electronic access to the required texts that they used to get from the library and we have some experience with this because this happened at the end of the winter 2020 semester as well. So, what about access to e-textbooks? Well in the winter semester we were able to get some temporary electronic access to platforms like VitalSource, who out of the kindness of their hearts, offered free access to students for the remainder of the semester. However, this kind of access is not going to be continued it was a very temporary measure. Publishers will not sell e-book versions of textbooks to libraries. We can buy other e-books but the textbooks are created for individual sale to students and so we find that it's not even possible for us to purchase many of the required textbooks in electronic form. The e-books that we are able to purchase also often have digital components attached to them, so software that limits access and use prevent things like copying pasting and, in some cases, downloading chapters as well.

So, the bottom line is students who don't purchase textbooks may have no real alternative access to that textbook content in the fall semester because they're also not going to even be able to borrow the library's copy, they're also not going to be in close proximity to friends that they can borrow from either. So, this is the problem that we suspect we'll be facing. Options: libraries can purchase e-books that are not textbooks in relevant subject area. Online course packs can be created and made available through course reserves, through our Ares course reserve system and they can include chapters scanned from print books, links to the library's collection of electronic resources which include e-books, journal articles, streaming media and links to openly licensed content such as content that's readily available on the internet. Also, Open Educational Resources, also known as OER, can be adopted instead of commercial textbooks. At this point I'm going to turn the presentation over to my colleague, Ali, who's going to talk more about using OER as course material.

Ali Versluis: Thanks so much Heather. Okay, so what are OER? So, want to make sure everyone's on the same page before we do a bit of a dive in. So OER, is kind of largely understood for the purposes of this conversation, are educational materials that are openly licensed and freely available for anyone to use and reuse. So, what do we mean by educational materials? So those folks on the call who may be familiar with OER; a lot of times the first foray folks tend to have around OER is thinking about open textbooks but the reality is that textbooks are just one example of the many kinds of materials that can be OER. So OER of course can be textbooks but they can also be streaming videos. They can be question banks, quizzes, ancillary materials. They can be infographics data visualizations. They can even be modules, but they can also be things like images and diagrams, slide decks, software, podcasts, courseware, simulations, tools, materials, technique; really anything that can be used to support access to knowledge. So, I often tell folks that the only limit is your imagination in terms of thinking about the many things that can be OER.

Ali Versluis: When you're thinking about what is and isn't OER the important things to remember is that the format type: so, what the thing is, isn't as important as the methods in which it's made available for use and reuse. And, objects don't have to be made in the university for the university, so anything can be used for learning if you think it has a use in your classroom, it can be an OER. This is different from something like open access and of course also different from things like library resources as Heather mentioned at the beginning of the chat. So open access tends to really focus... kind of largely understood, most people's conception of open access, and there's of course many different types of definitions, really kind of largely understood, tends to focus on free access to journal articles, data, books, things like that. So, it tends to focus more on free and accessible and less about the permission, so the options for adaptation are remixing which I'll talk about in a minute. OER is also different from library licensed content which is free to access for a community but costs a lot of money. The library pays millions of dollars every year to access electronic content (audio error) also has a lot of restrictions around who can access it, how they can share and how it can be used. So, what does it mean to be able to use and reuse content? So, there's five main ways that this can happen. Kind of referred to often as the five R's, so you can retain the content, so you have a right to make, own, and control copies of the content, so this means you can download, duplicate, store, manage copies locally on your computer or any other devices you have. You have the right to reuse it. So, you have the right to use the content in a wide range of ways such as in a class, in a research group, on a website, in a video. You also have the right to revise it. So, you have the right to adapt, adjust, modify, or alter the content itself, so translating content into another language, things like that, you have the right to remix. The right to combine the original or revised content with other material to create something new, such as, incorporating the content into a mash-up. And then lastly you have the right to redistribute; so, this means that you have the right to share copies of that original content, your revisions or your remixes, by giving a copy to a colleague or another member of your community.

So how do you know what you can do with an OER? Well OER are mostly designated as such through the inclusion of various Creative Commons licenses. So, these licenses work within the boundaries of copyright but provide an easy way to share the work with others. The simple icon designates particular conditions around how the work can be used. I don't have time to get into the intricacies of the various licenses and what they all are and what they represent. Heather and I could talk your ear off about that later, but essentially there's six different ways to combine these four symbols to create a Creative Commons license. So they all have the Creative Commons symbol in the left corner followed by a series of other symbols, so each of these symbols represents the different conditions. BY means you have to provide attribution. NC, it can't be used for commercial use, so non-commercial. SA, share-alike which means you have to share any remixes or revisions back with the same license or compatible license, and ND - no derivatives, so you can't actually change it. So if you're interested in using OER in the classroom, it's really important to have an understanding of each of these conditions so you can make sure that you're using the work legally and ethically.

Ali Versluis: There's one last Creative Commons tool as well and I intentionally say tool because it's not a license like the other ones. So the CC zero mark indicates that a work has been designated in the public domain. So essentially, this means that the copyright has expired or the creator of the work, whether it's a creative work like an image or video, or scholarly work like a book chapter, has decided to give off their copyright and this essentially allows anyone to do whatever they want with the work. So in terms of thinking about the benefits of using OER, there are a lot and we hope that after today's chat you feel a little bit more excited about checking out the alternatives that might exist for your course and kind of exploring how you might be able to use OER in the classroom. So as I have mentioned earlier OER do offer a potential solution to the challenge I mentioned before, around students having access to course materials. So, using an OER ensures that all students will have access to that material from day one, so that improves their chances of being successful in the course. This is a little bit different from something like an e-textbook option where students are really just renting the content temporarily. Usually when students do have access to an e-version of a textbook, they're usually just renting that content, they don't get to hold on to it for long-term, so different than a physical textbook, back in those good old days where you get to hold on to it if you wanted to. So they usually just have those materials temporarily for anywhere from four to six months. So this is really important I think in courses that are prerequisites for other courses or that are providing reference information that is kind of crucial across the curriculum. If students have to access those materials once they graduate, once they go on to a particular career, it can be really impactful to know that they still have that information when they need it. So using OER in your classroom also gives students flexibility, so this allows them to kind of engage with the material in whatever way they find meaningful; so they can download to their desktop, they could annotate it, they can even print it if they want it, and again a lot of these options don't tend to be available in current e-textbook platforms and functionality. And so not only do OER offer your students that flexibility, it also offers flexibility to you as an instructor. You can curate a number of different OER from all over the place, you can adapt a single textbook to suit the coverage of your course, or you can even create your own standalone content that can be shared with other instructors teaching the same course, either here at U of G, or somewhere else. Because OER tends to be born-digital content, it can usually be downloaded and accessed in a number of different formats. This tends to mean that they're more capital A accessible than traditional textbooks. But, even if they are missing accessible components because of course, as we know, content that is created online isn't always perfect in terms of accessibility. Because of this digital format they're often easier to adapt in order to make them accessible than materials that are available through a traditional platform. Lastly and perhaps most importantly there was a great deal of research out there that shows that students who use OER achieve similar and sometimes even better learning outcomes than students who are using traditional course materials, again because everyone has access to those materials.

Ali Versluis: So, before I pass things off to Harjinder, I just want to take a quick second to mention some ways that the library is providing support for OER. There is a "Finding and Using OER in the Classroom" webinar series. Our session on OER in the Sciences is being offered tomorrow from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. We have a session for folks in the Arts and Humanities next week. We did a Business and Social Sciences one a few weeks ago and the recording and the materials are available on the LANG school website as well. The purpose of these webinars isn't necessarily for folks to come and say "Yes I know everything about OER" after 90 minutes. It's really to get folks feeling comfortable with the concept of OER, getting them familiar with some of the resources that exist out there and getting them comfortable in exploring and beginning that process of thinking 'Could these actually work for my classroom?'. If you need help beyond that point by discussing things like Creative Commons licenses or searching for OER resources, so if you are encountering some difficulties or you need some support in navigating some of the platforms that exist out there, or just figuring out what resources exist on campus to help you integrate OER into your classroom, we can help you with that. You can email lib.oyer@uoguelph.ca and we'll be checking that. So, we'll help you there. As Heather mentioned too, OER is just one of several options that you have to address some of the challenges of an alternate delivery environment. It may not work for everyone and that's totally okay. As Heather mentioned there's lots of different ways that the library can provide support: creating a course pack of copyrighted content or scanning and making available select sections of a textbook or several textbooks that you're already using. And, if you'd like to explore a couple of different options, we can support you with that too, so if you just email libres2@uoguelph.ca, we'll help you there. In terms of what it's like to use OER, I'm just going to pass things off to Harjinder to chat about their experience using OER in the classroom. So Harjinder is a professor in the Department of Psychology who has used OER in the past, so take it away Harjinder.

Harjinder Gill: Hey, thank you Ali. So, I was teaching a new course in psychology called Teams Leadership and Professional Behavior and in teaching the course I signed a textbook that I thought was great. It was very accessible and had lots of good examples, but at the end of the year students complained about the cost. It was a business textbook and students also complained that there didn't seem to be enough psychology in it. So the following year I actually picked an IO psychology textbook which was a little bit more advanced and I was a little bit worried that it had a little bit less of examples and graphics for the students. And again, they didn't really like the textbook. And so around the time that I was trying to decide what to do for the third year, I was teaching the course Ali came to one of our faculty meetings and she talked about OER and that was the first I really heard of it. So I set up a meeting with her and I was planning originally to put together OER materials for each chapter of my textbook, or my course, each section. Through Ali looking for stuff she actually ended up finding a textbook that seemed to address a lot of the chapters that I would be covering in the course. Ali also really helped me find some YouTube videos that were OER and helped me dress some of my slides better with free photos from some websites that she was familiar with. So I had a really good experience working with her getting the course ready and I was curious to see how students would react to it. The textbook wasn't perfect, I don't think any textbook is, so there was definitely –in the lectures I would supplement material or disagree with the textbook at certain points and was clear about that.

Harjinder Gill: But overall students really liked the textbook, they loved that it was free, it's a course that is mandatory in psychology, but not all the students particularly like taking it. I don't have the highest teacher ratings for the class. And so I think they appreciate that, since they didn't like the course, they didn't have to invest a lot of money in the textbook. What I did also find was at the end of the course I did have a couple students email me asking me for the link again because it was useful for them in other contexts. So I liked the fact that with the OER they can use it into perpetuity; they can continue using as long as they want. I think that covers what I wanted to say. If you have any questions about it, I definitely was very new to it and I'm glad now that we're in the environment we are in, that I did go that way because it'll be a little bit easier for me in fall 2020. Thanks.

