

Evolving Roles for Librarians and Sustaining Value through OER Initiatives

Presented at the California Academic & Research Libraries 2018 Conference

April 13-15, 2018

Redwood City, California

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Abstract

Free and equal access to information is one of the tenets of librarianship, and increasingly librarians are not just involved in Open Educational Resource (OER) initiatives but are often leading affordable learning projects campus-wide. This has given librarians an opportunity for deeper collaboration with faculty to support curriculum directly with library resources and services. The presenters will lead an interactive discussion on the epiphany they reached while leading OER workshops: teaching faculty often lack basic information literacy skills! Who can blame them? Copyright is complicated, discovery tools can be confusing, and ebook platforms are cumbersome to use. This collaboration between faculty and librarians has provided an opportunity to explore new roles for librarians in curriculum development, instructional design as well as more authentic integration of information literacy throughout the course. The presenters will also explore the implications and sustainability of these new roles for liaison librarians.

Summary

Introduction

When we (librarians) think of the traditional liaison role and our relationships with teaching faculty we most likely think of course-integrated library instruction and collection development. However, with increasing library involvement (and leadership) in OER/textbook affordability initiatives, we believe this affords opportunities to work with faculty in new and more meaningful ways, while creating new value to the university. The presenters have discovered that faculty lack information literacy skills when it comes to finding and evaluating OER and frequently end up utilizing library materials as well as OER when making their course materials more affordable. The value we have shown to faculty in assisting with curriculum development, discovery systems, and our commitment to student success has changed the way the faculty view the library (not just books & "database instruction").

Lesson learned from working with faculty

We spend so much time on information literacy for students, but we forget that faculty also know very little about what we do outside of instruction and collection development. OER initiatives provide opportunities to collaborate with faculty in a very meaningful way. The following are our biggest takeaways from working with faculty on textbook affordability:

- Saving students money is not enough of a motivator → target faculty who are already active in teaching & learning as well as technology communities on campus
- Faculty are confused about copyright and fair use, or permalinks → make sure have a copyright expert on hand and include a discussion in your workshops
- Faculty were confused about what an OER is, how to find and evaluate was perceived as challenging
 - Some faculty also just don't want to do the work ("I need a grad student to read through OER") → don't waste your time, find faculty who are open to change
- Faculty were not always aware of course reserves → we started to provide a service that's essentially a digitally curated course pack where library staff are embedded directly into the LMS course and embed library resources or digitized copies of book chapters
- They value their relationships with their liaison librarian but after working with us they really started to see us as experts of information and knowledgeable of technology, instructional design and trends in higher education
- OER is not always the right solution → there is no magical textbook that fits ALL their needs, all the faculty we worked with used a combination of OER, library materials, and digitized chapters from traditional textbook

When you're planning faculty, workshops make sure they are user-centered and try to get as much information about who is attending. Think about what you want your outcomes for every workshop to be and match it with presenters or activities. See our lesson planning document: <http://bit.ly/oerlesson>.

Librarian Leadership and Sustainability

Free and equal access to information is one of the tenets of librarianship, so it's no surprise librarians are not just involved in OER initiatives but are taking on leadership roles across college campuses. Librarians often have a more altruistic motivation, we're not doing this because it's trendy or for recognition, it directly benefits students. Our connection with students is unique in comparison with teaching faculty and campus administrators or staff. Librarians possess expertise in finding and evaluating information, copyright, teaching and learning pedagogy, educational technology and trends in higher education. Not just about OER, but really about finding and accessing information (Open Access movement).

Textbook affordability initiatives require a culture shift across campus, it takes time to build up a program and gain a good reputation on campus. A campus serving 40,000 may have one OER coordinator or a small working group, making it difficult to sustain this work while still participating in liaison librarianship. Library leadership in OER and textbook affordability has the potential to change the way the campus views the library and our contribution to student success. In order to make these initiatives successful and sustainable here are some best practices:

- Inclusive collections development policies → review your collection development policies to make them more inclusive and less anti-textbooks. Libraries can't purchase ALL the textbooks for every class but we can provide alternative and supplemental instructional materials
- Librarian & course reserves collaborations → start thinking of your course reserves staff as textbook experts, they often are already working with faculty and bookstore staff on collecting data and usage statistics that could help you with your initiative. They could also be hidden copyright experts.
- Every librarian should know how to find OER → develop librarian training sessions so they can support their faculty with finding more affordable options for course materials. Your colleagues have the potential to be your biggest advocates.
- We cannot do it alone → It is simply not possible for one librarian or a group of 5 individuals to change the campus culture, but something small can grow in to larger movement. Think about possible campus partnerships:
 - Faculty development
 - Campus IT / instructional designers
 - Bookstore
 - Provost's Office
 - Faculty governance / committees
- This is a student success initiative → help others see the connection between access to course materials (or lack thereof) and student retention

For help with getting started, check out this action plan: <http://bit.ly/oeraction>. This document will provide guidance for assigning tasks, developing outcomes, and communication strategies as you build relationships across campus.