

What Can OER advocates learn from the traditional faculty textbook adoption experience?

ABSTRACT

Previous research has demonstrated the positive impacts that Open Educational Resources (OER) can have on student retention and learning, but these connections may not be compelling enough to persuade faculty to adopt OER resources in lieu of traditional textbooks and materials. What are OER advocates missing? What could OER advocates do better or differently? To be successful with OER, it is important to understand not only what OER are replicating or replacing in the classroom, but also understand the whole faculty experience around textbook adoption. How do faculty hear about textbooks? How do vendors communicate to faculty? What are faculty expectations when interacting with new textbooks? This poster reports on a campus survey of faculty and their experiences and expectations regarding textbooks adoption. The results of the survey suggest some lessons OER advocates can learn from when interacting with faculty about textbook selection options such as OER.

METHODOLOGY

A 34 question survey instrument was created in Qualtrics and distributed to faculty at an R2 “high research activity” doctoral university. The survey was distributed via direct email and within the daily faculty and staff newsletter during February and March 2018. No incentives were offered to respondents. Questions were adopted from previous OER surveys and modified to inquire about textbook adoption. The OER Adoption Pyramid developed by Cox & Trotter (2017) was adapted as a framework to examine faculty textbook adoption: *Access, Permission, Awareness, Capacity, Availability, and Volition*.

Cox and Trotter. 2017. “An OER Framework, heuristic and lens: Tools for Understanding Lecturers’ Adoption of OER.” *Open Praxis* 9, no. 2: 151-171. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5944/openpraxis.9.2.571>

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Teaching Status (34 responses)	Count	Percentage
Part-Time	4	12%
Full-Time	30	88%
Tenure Status (34 responses)		
Tenured	18	53%
Tenure-Track	9	26%
Not Tenured	7	21%
Age (34 responses)		
45 or older	18	53%
44 or younger	16	47%
Years Teaching (34 responses)		
Less than 5	6	18%
10-15	11	32%
16-20	9	26%
More than 20	8	24%
Departmental Affiliation (28 responses)		
Humanities/Social Sciences	13	46%
Science	9	32%
Education	3	11%
Other	3	11%

TOP 4 CHALLENGES TO TEXTBOOK ADOPTION

1. too hard/time consuming (27%)
2. not high quality (17%)
3. not enough resources for my subject (15%)
4. no comprehensive catalog of resources (10%)

AGE, TENURE, TECHNOLOGY USE, and TEXTBOOK DISCOVERY

Faculty under 44 years old were more likely to select the *Internet as the sole method to obtain resources* for courses (33%) compared to those over 45 (6%).

Faculty who found *searching for resources difficult* (55%) as well as those who had *not used an OER* previously (41%) were more likely to *select textbook manufacturers as the sole method for learning about resources*.

However, those with tenure (18%) and those over 45 (15%) were unique in identifying *no comprehensive catalog of resources* as a challenge, while those without tenure (15%) and those under 44 (14%) *identified the difficulty integrating materials into the technology they use*.

WHY CHANGE?

One faculty reported *that student cost was not high enough to justify making the switch* from the “digital textbooks that offer robust teaching and learning tools” *“Inertia is a big deal. Changing textbooks has little upside in my field as they are all pretty much the same.”*
-Faculty survey respondent.

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS INFLUENCE TEXTBOOK ADOPTIONS

When deciding which textbooks to adopt, faculty engaged in social behaviors with 26 speaking with their peers and 14 speaking with vendors/publishers/sales representatives about their decisions (faculty could select more than one answer).

LIBRARY LIAISON BUT NOT TEXTBOOK LIAISON?

Peers were by far the number one response for both OER users and non-users when asked who faculty talk to about textbook adoption. Students, vendors, publishers, department chairs, and librarians are all less likely to be consulted when it comes to textbooks adoption.

THE STUDENT’S BEST FRIEND ARE UNTENURED FACULTY!

24% of faculty participants without tenure indicated that they also speak with students about textbook selection, compared to none of the tenured faculty indicating student opinions were consulted.

Six essential textbook adoption factors	Survey questions for textbook adopters
<p>Volition</p> <p>The sixth and final factor relates to both internal and institutional motivation and includes the benefits and deterrents experienced when selecting and creating textbooks. Volition is shaped by personal and pedagogical values, norms, and support and becomes the key factor in textbook use/creation only when the other five factors are met.</p>	<p>What benefits do you, as an instructor, derive from using a textbook promoted by a vendor?</p> <p>What perks do you receive if/when you use a textbook promoted by a vendor?</p> <p>What challenges or deterrents do you encounter when selecting and adopting textbooks?</p> <p>Do you have any desire to incorporate Open Educational Resources in your courses?</p>
<p>Availability</p> <p>The fifth factor relates to the whether textbooks of requisite relevance, quality, and quantity can be used, obtained, or created.</p>	<p>Where do you obtain resources for your courses?</p> <p>Does student cost factor into your textbook selection?</p> <p>When selecting resources for your teaching, rank the following factors as most important to least important.</p> <p>How would you generally rate the quality (factually correct, up-to-date, well written, effective) of the textbooks and educational materials in the subject areas you teach?</p> <p>Have you found OERs—of acceptable relevance, utility, and quality—that you can use?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-Up: In which area(s) can OERs improve?
<p>Capacity</p> <p>The fourth factor relates to the means and skills needed to use or create textbooks. These can include factors such as time, technical or semantic skills, search or implementation strategies, and peer or institutional support.</p>	<p>How many hours on average does it take you to select and adopt course materials?</p> <p>How would you generally rate the ease of searching for educational resources for your courses?</p> <p>In the courses you teach, what support could make selection and adoption of educational resources easier?</p> <p>Do you know how the different Creative Commons (CC) licenses impact the ways in which you can use course materials you develop?</p> <p>Do you know how and where to search for and identify Open Educational Resources?</p>
<p>Awareness</p> <p>The third factor relates to knowledge or understanding of, or exposure to textbooks in their subject areas. This also includes the knowledge gained by speaking to others about textbook selection or creation.</p>	<p>How are you made aware of textbooks in the subject areas you teach?</p> <p>Who do you talk to about textbook adoption?</p> <p>Please rate your awareness of Open Education Resources.</p>
<p>Permission</p> <p>The second factor relates to the right to use or create textbooks for their courses. This includes whether institutional permission is required for textbook use or creation as well as who (faculty member or institution) holds copyright over teaching materials.</p>	<p>Is departmental or college approval required during your textbook selection/adoption process?</p> <p>Does your department or college have preferred vendors for textbook materials?</p> <p>Do you possess copyright over the teaching materials or learning objects that you have modified or created at your university?</p> <p>Do you have permission (from your curriculum committee, etc.) to use Open Educational Resources in your courses?</p>
<p>Access</p> <p>The first factor, and base of the pyramid, relates to the existing institutional infrastructure and how it supports and/or inhibits the use or creation of textbooks.</p>	<p>Does your university offer adequate support for the electronic textbook platforms or digital learning resource(s) (e.g. YouTube) you use in your courses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-Up: Which resources could be better supported? <p>Can you embed textbooks in your university's Learning Management System (LMS) when necessary/desired?</p> <p>Can you get IT help for issues related to online textbook materials?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-Up: Who provides the IT help? <p>Please rate the quality of your university's Open Educational Resources (OERs) infrastructure. Infrastructure includes the fundamental facilities, systems, and structures that facilitate OERs, such as hardware, software, support, training/professional development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-Up: How could the university improve the quality of its OER infrastructure to better support faculty who want to produce, adopt, or use these types of resources?

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Related chapter by authors on “social aspect of OER” found in *Open Praxis, Open Access* (Chase & Haugh, 2019)