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 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**.


**RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Rank (34 responses)</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prof/Assoc.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Rank</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure Status</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Time</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part Time</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure Status</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Tenured</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (42 responses)</td>
<td>45 or older</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 or younger</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years Teaching (26 responses)</td>
<td>Less than 5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department/Specialty (30 responses)</td>
<td>Humanities/Physical Sciences</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOP 4 CHALLENGES TO TEXTBOOK ADOPTION**

1. too hard/time consuming (37%)
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 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 member stated 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/publications/sales representatives about their decisions (faculty could select more than one answer). Peer influence is a significant factor in adoption decisions. When peers recommend a book, it is more likely to be adopted.

**LIBRARY LIASON BUT NOT TEXTBOOK LIASON?**

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.

**Six essential textbook adoption factors**

- **Awareness**
- **Availability**
- **Capacity**
- **Volition**
- **Permission**
- **Access**

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.

**Survey questions for textbook adopters**

- **What benefits do you, as an instructor, derive from a textbook promoted by a vendor?**
- **What perks do you receive if/when you use a textbook promoted by a vendor?**
- **What challenges or deterrents do you encounter when selecting and adopting textbooks?**
- **Do you have any desire to incorporate Open Educational Resources in your courses?**
- **Where do you obtain resources for your courses?**
- **Do students cost factor into your textbook selection?**
- **When selecting resources for your teaching, rank the following factors as most important to least important.**
- **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?**
- **How many hours on average does it take you to select and adopt course materials?**
- **How would you generally rate the ease of searching for educational resources for your courses?**
- **In the courses you teach, what support could make selection and adoption of educational resources easier?**
- **Do you know how the different Creative Commons (CC) licenses impact the ways in which you can use course materials you develop?**
- **Do you know how and where to search for and identify Open Educational Resources?**
- **Are there any gaps in the way you obtain OER in your courses?**
- **Who do you talk to about textbook adoption?**
- **How are you made aware of textbooks in the subject areas you teach?**
- **What benefits do you, as an instructor, derive from using a textbook promoted by a publisher?**
- **What steps do you take to ensure students have access to the required textbooks in your course?**
- **Follow-Up: Who can you talk to about textbook adoption?**
- **Follow-Up: Are there gaps in how you obtain OER in your courses?**
- **Follow-Up: How could the university improve the quality of its OER resources?**
- **Follow-Up: What benefits do you, as an instructor, derive from using a textbook promoted by a publisher?**
- **Follow-Up: How could the university improve the quality of its OER resources?**

**Follow-up:**
- **In which area(s) can OERs improve?**
- **Does your department or college have preferred vendors for textbook materials?**
- **Can you embed textbooks in your university’s Learning Management System (LMS) when necessary/desired?**
- **Can you get IT help for issues related to online textbook materials?**
- **Can you get IT help for issues related to online textbook materials?**
- **Can you embed textbooks in your university’s Learning Management System (LMS) when necessary/desired?**
- **Who provides the IT help?**
- **Does your department or college have preferred vendors for textbook materials?**

**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.