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Librarians at the Intersection of Information Literacy and Open Educational Practices in Higher Education

Merinda McLure, Innovative Practices Section Co-Editor

Abstract

Merinda McLure, Innovative Practices Section Co-Editor, introduces a special theme issue of the journal that explores intersections between information literacy and open educational practices.

Keywords: higher education, information literacy, open educational practices, open education, open educational resources, OER, open pedagogy

Special issue exploring the intersections between information literacy and open educational practices

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Our *Communications in Information Literacy (CIL)* editorial team is excited to present this special theme issue of articles that explore intersections between information literacy and open educational practices. These practices “seek to fully use the potential inherent in OER [open educational resources] to support learning and to help students both contribute to knowledge and construct their own learning pathways” (EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, 2018). This focus is partly inspired by work such as Mary Ann Cullen and Elizabeth Dill’s edited collection *Intersections of Open Educational Resources and Information Literacy* (2022), reviewed in this issue. This theme has felt especially timely to us from ideation through production as the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact higher education in myriad, unforeseen ways, frequently highlighting inequities in student access to and participation in learning that OER and open educational practices may, in part, address.

In response to the profound impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education communities, teaching, and learning, educators and librarians have undertaken rapid and monumental efforts to pivot to and ensure the robust delivery of remote and online teaching and ensure increased virtual access to library and information resources and services. These circumstances have amplified the unique affordances of online, openly-licensed educational resources that are immediately accessible; may be retained, revised, remixed, reused, and redistributed (Wiley, n.d.) by educators and students alike; and that realize important course materials cost savings, and more equitable access to learning, for students. In addition, the role of open educational practices in fostering students’ shared inquiry and reflective, collaborative knowledge construction.

Before the pandemic, academic librarians were already well positioned to collaborate with educators to leverage OER and open educational practices to benefit educators and students. In many colleges and universities, librarians are well established as critical open education advocates and indispensable partners in educators’ exploration and implementation of open educational practices. As the authors of this *CIL* issue explore, librarians’ participation in advancing open educational practices is diverse, multifaceted, sophisticated, and intersects with their contributions to both educator and student information literacy. Librarians, whether in positions dedicated to advancing open educational practices or working in their

capacities as subject, scholarly communication, teaching, or other specialists, are frequently the individuals leading institutional open education initiatives at the highest level while also directly supporting educators in exploring and integrating open educational practices in their teaching. Librarians are also collaborating with educators to teach students about OER, critically cultivating students' learning and informed ethical agency as creators and consumers of open educational resources and practices.

The thematic focus of this issue, and more broadly, the passionate spirit of the open education movement, also align with the editorial team's values as articulated in our Statement of Values (Communications in Information Literacy, n.d.). We commit to the free, open, and ethical sharing of knowledge; support the agency of creators; aim to advance social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion; and commit to practicing care in all our interactions and relationships with *CIL* constituents. Educators, students, and librarians likewise may wrestle with and center these values as they engage in open educational practices.

We hope the articles included in this issue will inspire readers and authors to continue exploring in future issues of *CIL* the many intersections between open educational practices and information literacy, as librarians' contributions to open educational practices only continue to grow.

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