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# Open Textbooks at Oregon State University: A Case Study of New Opportunities for Academic Libraries and University Presses

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**INTRODUCTION** This article describes a joint open textbook publishing initiative begun in 2013 between Oregon State University (OSU) Libraries and Press and the Open Educational Resources and Emerging Technologies unit of Oregon State University's Extended Campus. **DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM** This initiative combines the Open Access values and project management resources of OSU Libraries, the book production (peer review, editing, design, marketing) expertise of OSU Press, and the technological development skills of the Open Educational Resources and Emerging Technologies unit. Authored by OSU faculty and focused across some of the University's signature areas, the initiative seeks to establish a sustainable model for research libraries and university presses to collaborate with each other and other partners to publish open textbooks that will benefit students on both economic and educational levels. The article analyzes how open textbooks fit within the emerging library publishing movement, examines the implementation of the OSU open textbook publishing initiative, and conveys some lessons learned for other libraries to consider as they entertain the possibility of similar collaborations. **NEXT STEPS** A description of next steps includes tracking course adoptions of the textbooks as well as establishing sustainable digital publishing platforms and business models.

**NOTE:** Some material included herein was drawn from Faye A. Chadwell's presentation as part of the panel, "Organizational Alignment for Library Publishing Services," at the 2014 Library Publishing Forum held in Kansas City, Missouri.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial, academic libraries have grappled with textbook issues. Nearly any university librarian or college library director can offer stories of recurring appeals from students for the library to buy textbooks that can be checked out or put on reserve. These requests are clearly based on economic motivations as students resist paying hundreds of dollars apiece for textbooks they view as unlikely to have usefulness after the course ends. The ability of libraries to meet student needs in this area through the purchase of textbooks is limited. While some libraries make a concerted effort to collect textbooks, most appear unable to undertake this task on a comprehensive level, given the frequency of textbook revisions, the scope of textbook usage on any campus and limited collection budgets that are already committed to other vital resources (Pollitz, Christie, & Middleton, 2009; Raschke & Shanks, 2011).

Some academic libraries, however, are pursuing new strategies that revolve around open textbooks. These textbooks are part of the larger Open Educational Resources (OER) movement. OERs are teaching and learning materials that are released online under open licenses that allow for the reuse, revision, remixing, and redistribution of their content. As the OER movement has gained momentum, open textbooks are being produced by a variety of entities across disciplines. This trend is coalescing with the appearance of librarian positions and services that focus on the discovery and adoption of OERs, as well as the emergence of the library publishing field, in which academic libraries are assuming the role of publisher for the intellectual output of their institutions. While library publishing programs are becoming more commonplace, the creation of open textbooks through these models is just beginning to take shape. Within this landscape, there are important opportunities for libraries to become involved in the publication of open textbooks through their own publishing structures, or in collaboration with university presses and other campus partners, to provide both financial and educational benefits to students.

In 2013, Oregon State University Libraries and Press (OSULP) developed an open textbook publishing initiative in partnership with the Open Educational Resources and Emerging Technologies unit within Oregon State University's Extended Campus (Ecampus). Ecampus manages OSU's online degree program, and is part of the OSU Division of Outreach and Engagement. OSU Libraries and OSU Press are part of the same organization, but operate somewhat independently. While each has its own publishing activities, the open textbook initiative brings the two together in an innovative way that leverages their shared expertise. This article will discuss this collaboration and the broader context of open textbooks in relation to the affordability of higher education and the library publishing movement. It will

also examine future directions to consider as more libraries engage in the creation of open textbooks at their universities. In broad terms, the article will illustrate how involvement with open textbooks aligns with the shared mission of academic libraries to remove barriers to the free flow of information in support of teaching and learning.

## **OPEN TEXTBOOKS AND THE AFFORDABILITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

The affordability of higher education is one of the most critical, and talked about, issues in academia today. As state and federal support for colleges and universities, as well as student financial aid, have declined sharply over the past ten years, institutions have accordingly increased tuition and fees. Over the past decade, textbook prices have increased by 82 percent, or three times the rate of inflation (United States Government Accountability Office, 2013, p. 6). The average student now spends \$1,200 per year on textbooks and supplies in the United States (College Board, 2013, p. 11). As a result, students are avoiding buying textbooks, even with the awareness that their grades and learning may be compromised. A 2013 survey of over 2,000 students found that 65 percent had decided against buying a textbook because it was too expensive; 94 percent of those students were concerned that doing so would hurt their grade (Senack, 2014, p. 4). While used textbooks and rentals offer lower-priced alternatives, textbook-related costs make up an increasing percentage of higher education expenses with far-reaching negative consequences for many students.

In reviewing the various components that constitute the cost of attending college (tuition, room and board, etc.), textbooks make up the one category that can be directly influenced by faculty on both the supply and demand sides of the equation. Faculty members (or academic departments) choose the textbooks for their courses, and many textbooks are written by professors. This offers a tremendous opportunity for libraries to act as catalysts working with faculty on the creation and adoption of open textbooks that not only benefit students on an economic level, but also have the potential to enhance learning through multimedia elements and other interactive features.

While governmental support for higher education is generally on a downward trend, there are counter examples of increasing financial support for the development of open textbooks. In recent years, the state governments of Florida, California, and Washington, as well as the provincial government of British Columbia, have funded open textbook publishing programs for higher education. (For more details on these programs, see <http://studentpirgs.org/open-textbooks/about> in the “Writing and Publishing Open Textbooks” section.) The U.S. federal government is also poised to enter this sphere as the “Affordable College Textbook Act” (S.7014/H.R.3538) works its way through Congress. If passed, this

bill would create a large-scale, competitive grant program to fund the creation of OERs by educational institutions. As these developments unfold, academic libraries should proactively determine where they fit into the OER and open textbook paradigms to identify potential partners and funders.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Library publishing of open textbooks is in its infancy, and literature on the topic is limited. Most publications on library engagement with open textbooks and OERs focus on efforts by librarians to facilitate their discovery and adoption by faculty members, rather than their production by libraries. For example, an international survey of 57 libraries on their roles in OER initiatives revealed, “The main areas of library involvement are: description and classification, management, preservation, dissemination, and promotion of OER” (Bueno-de-la-Fuente, Robertson, & Boon, 2012, p. 7). This report goes on to discuss the dissemination function. This role typically involves hosting OERs in libraries’ institutional repositories, although these libraries are often not playing an active role in the creation of the OERs themselves. A 2014 Ithaka S+R report on the open textbook market echoes this perspective:

Some college and university libraries see a role for themselves here, at very least in directing students and faculty to relevant content. In some cases, they have been able to play a role in gaining attention for the issue on their campuses, and to incentivize faculty to consider alternatives to expensive textbooks. Still, despite recent development of scholarly communications services at many libraries, most do not yet have expertise in textbook development, or an effective means to develop and distribute a textbook that will be used beyond its author’s campus. (Maron, 2014, p. 9)

Similar observations are made in Karen Okamoto’s article on academic libraries as advocates for open textbooks and OERs. She outlines the following types of library engagement with open textbooks and OERs: advocacy, promotion, and discovery; evaluation, collection, preservation, and access; curation and facilitation; and funding (Okamoto, 2013, p. 271). Okamoto references a few instances of direct library support for the creation of open textbooks at Temple University, North Carolina State University, and the State University of New York (SUNY).

The nature of the support provided by these libraries varies. At Temple, the library offers funds for the faculty development of alternatives to traditional textbooks that may or may not be full-blown open textbooks (<http://sites.temple.edu/alttextbook/about-the-event/>).

At North Carolina State, the library collaborates with the Physics department to host open textbooks developed independently by the department's faculty (Raschke & Shanks, 2011). Conversely, the Open SUNY Textbooks project seems to be the most fully developed library-based initiative that formally publishes open textbooks (<http://opensuny.org/omp/index.php/SUNYOpenTextbooks/index>).

Open SUNY Textbooks was established in 2012 by SUNY libraries with support from SUNY Innovative Instruction Technology Grants. This initiative seeks to publish 15 open textbooks by SUNY faculty authors with the libraries providing publishing services and infrastructure. As of June 2014, five titles have been published. The initiative at Oregon State University resembles the SUNY project in seeking to publish open textbooks by its institution's faculty. These two projects illustrate how open textbook production is an emerging component of the library publishing movement, although the Oregon State initiative does include a university press partner housed within the library organization. As Okamoto observes, "Library involvement in the funding, curation, and creation of OER materials in the United States may be part of a new and growing trend of what some are calling 'library publishing'" (Okamoto, 2013, p. 274).

Over the past ten years, there is a clear trend within academic libraries to launch publishing programs. This phenomenon is reflected in the 2013 establishment of the Library Publishing Coalition (LPC) with 51 member libraries. The LPC's *Library Publishing Directory 2014* describes a broad range of publishing and dissemination activities at 115 academic libraries (Lippincott, 2013). These endeavors include publishing monographs and Open Access journals, as well as hosting resources such as technical reports, conference proceedings, and electronic theses and dissertations via institutional repositories. The Directory indicates that 11 libraries were participating in textbook publishing as of 2013, but there is no further information to indicate what percentage of these textbooks are open. Another volume on library publishing, the *Library Publishing Toolkit*, offers case studies of various publishing initiatives at libraries, yet textbooks are only mentioned four times in its 381 pages, including one reference to an open textbook published by Utah State University Libraries (Brown, 2013, p. 278). Taken together, the existing literature suggests that open textbooks are currently the focus of a small portion of library publishing activity but represent a potential growth area as more libraries simultaneously undertake publishing services and engage with the OER movement.

The emergence of library publishing has generally coincided with a period of increasing mergers and collaborations between academic libraries and university presses. Both of these trends are creating an environment in which library involvement in the publication of open

textbooks would seem to be a natural outcome. There are also possibilities for libraries to partner with presses outside of their organizational structures that are already engaged with open textbook publishing. One example of such a university press is the University Press of Florida and its Orange Grove Texts Plus. A scenario in which libraries and presses unite with faculty to take ownership of the creation and dissemination of textbooks in ways that are economically beneficial to students requires some shared risk-taking by all partners.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The open textbook publishing collaboration at Oregon State University is based on a vision that is neatly captured in the Ithaka S+R report:

What if...collaboration among university presses, university libraries, campus-based instructional design groups, and faculty could produce the best of class textbooks? The presses have needed expertise in developing collections, editing manuscripts, and managing distribution channels; libraries have a strong position on campus to support faculty and students and could identify useful materials, whether created on campus or elsewhere. To be sure that any new materials developed would be useful to the wider community, perhaps editorial boards comprised of experts across multiple institutions could be empanelled, by discipline and by topic. (Maron, 2014, p. 10)

OSULP determined that open textbooks were a natural fit with the Libraries' longstanding commitment to Open Access and its growing involvement in library publishing, as well as the Press' interest in strengthening its impact on teaching and learning at OSU. The organization also recognized great benefit could be found in leveraging pre-existing connections with OSU Ecampus. OSULP views open textbooks as a mechanism through which all three partners can contribute to OSU's land grant mission by making education more economically accessible.

## Background on Partners

Like many campuses across the United States, Oregon State University has experienced years of student complaints about high textbook costs. As Oregon's land grant university, the cost of textbooks is at odds with OSU's mission to make higher education more accessible to the citizens of the state. OSU has attempted various actions to ameliorate this situation. This includes a project between the Provost's Office and the campus bookstore to increase discounts for students. These attempts also involved the Libraries' investigation on the use of funds to purchase more textbooks to place on reserve (Pollitz, Christie, & Middleton, 2009).

These earlier attempts to address rising textbook costs collectively set the stage for this initiative as the collaborators shared a common interest in tackling this problem by enabling the creation of open textbooks by OSU faculty. OSULP is the second largest research library in Oregon and the state's only university press, which joined with the libraries in 2007. OSU Press is one of 20 presses that report to a university library in some capacity among more than 130 members of the Association of American University Presses. This organizational configuration gives OSULP a distinct advantage when considering publishing initiatives because strong publishing services exist in both sides of the house. Also, the major goals of the OSULP 2012-2017 strategic plan motivate us to investigate partnerships and embed the organization's expertise in endeavors that contribute to students' academic success and highlight the University's signature areas of research.

The publishing services of the Libraries and of the Press are focused on producing and disseminating authoritative and peer-reviewed scholarship, especially scholarship produced at OSU. The Press' publishing niche is Oregon and the Pacific Northwest with a strong focus on natural resources and the landscape as well as environmental, cultural, social, literary, and historical aspects of the region. Library publishing services complement rather than duplicate Press publishing operations, though collaboration between the two is steadily increasing. Library publishing services include the hosting of peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed journals and all publications by OSU Extension Services. Related dissemination services include OSU theses and dissertations, as well as conference proceedings, technical reports, and other materials in the ScholarsArchive@OSU institutional repository.

OSULP's partner in the open textbook publishing initiative, the Open Educational Resources and Emerging Technologies unit, is part of Ecampus, which is regularly ranked among America's best providers of online education. The OER unit, which was created in 2013 using both existing and new positions to more fully support OER development to improve learning outcomes, was an ideal partner. Its staff has the technical expertise to develop the multimedia content that is essential to the textbooks, and as part of the University's very successful online education system, the OER unit was able to provide the financial incentives that were offered to authors as a core part of the initiative.

The project draws well on the strengths of the respective organizations—the programming savvy of the OER unit, the multi-partner project management skills and Open Access principles of the Libraries, and the expertise with peer reviewing, editing, design, and marketing of books within the Press. Members of the initiative's planning group include the director of the OER unit, the Associate University Librarian for Research and Scholarly Communication, the University Librarian and Press Director, and the Associate Director of the Press.

## The Open Textbook Publishing Initiative

After a series of meetings to conceptualize the initiative, the planning group issued a request for proposals (RFP) to OSU faculty in June 2013 (<http://osulibrary.oregonstate.edu/oregon-state-university-open-textbook-request-proposal>). This campus-wide call sought proposals to develop open textbooks geared toward specific fields of study and related courses that were articulated by the authors. Proposals that applied to multiple, high-enrollment undergraduate courses in natural resources, geosciences, forestry, marine biology, agricultural sciences, and environmental sciences were preferred. These subject areas are among the University's signature areas and also align well with the Press' publishing niche. If other library/press publishing partnerships pursued this approach, there would likely be less duplication of subject coverage in future open textbooks.

All proposed textbooks had to be original content or a compilation of openly licensed materials. Authors were asked to describe how their proposed textbooks would make use of extensive, original multimedia and interactive content. The proposal also stipulated that final acceptance of the proposal was dependent on approval of the OSU Press Editorial Board just like every book project the Press undertakes. Successful authors could expect to be compensated up to \$15,000 to produce their manuscript. These funds are not an outright cash payment, but rather a budget transfer that the author can use for research support, professional travel, or similar purposes.

To gain insights about how this type of publishing might work, the planning group developed a prototype concurrently with the RFP. The group selected an existing OSU Press title, *Living With Earthquakes in the Pacific Northwest: A Survivor's Guide*, originally published by OSU Press in 1998 and used widely in college courses throughout the Northwest. During the summer of 2013, the OER unit worked with the author, Professor Bob Yeats, to create an updated open, electronic version of the book that includes video clips of earthquakes where still photos once resided and replaces many graphs and illustrations with animated features. The creation of this prototype provided several benefits to the project:

- experience creating interactive content from an existing text;
- experience creating different formats of an electronic textbook (i.e., html, ePub);
- evidence for participating authors that this partnership could yield a valuable resource to transcend the physical print format.

Several versions of *Living With Earthquakes in the Pacific Northwest* (ePub, html, and PDF) are available at: <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/oer/earthquake/>. (The PDF version can

be accessed via a web browser, but use of Adobe is recommended to fully engage with its multi-media content.)

The RFP resulted in multiple inquiries, and ultimately nine proposals were received. The four proposals that were selected span a variety of academic disciplines, covering animal nutrition, biochemistry, biocomputing, and ecological management. The successful proposals met the criteria of being adoptable in high-enrollment undergraduate courses or relating to distinctive subject areas for the University. The biocomputing and ecological management proposals also have strong cross-disciplinary potential for course adoptions. The publication of the books is scheduled for 2015 and early 2016, and they will be official OSU Press titles. The books will be available in four formats (HTML, PDF, iBook, and ePub) to increase the chances of course adoption within and outside OSU. There will be a print-on-demand edition likely to be distributed via a service such as LightningSource™. All books included in the project will have a similar design intended to brand the texts as part of the OSU initiative. The textbooks will be issued with a CC BY-NC license to allow others to build upon their content non-commercially, while providing appropriate attribution to the OSU authors.

After accepting the four proposals, the planning group met with the authors to discuss a tentative timeline, workflow, and distribution of funds. For all authors, the project team outlined the following benefits to participating in the project:

- Final acceptance of projects is dependent on approval of the OSU Press Editorial Board, a board composed of scholars from OSU and other Oregon institutions of higher education who guide the publication of all manuscripts proposed for publication with OSU Press. This editorial support and the peer reviewing process led by University Press staff will lead to an authoritative peer-reviewed work published with a respected university press imprint.
- The Press and Ecampus have marketing personnel to promote the textbooks broadly, increasing visibility for the author and the potential for adoption. This can include a presence at discipline-specific conferences and direct marketing to departments and programs as potential adopters of the textbooks. The respective marketing departments have connections to the University's marketing division that can also heighten visibility. The Libraries will also develop strategies to facilitate adoption of the textbooks through placement in various OER repositories.
- The technological prowess of OER staff will take a lead role in developing the interactivity of multimedia content in consultation with the authors, thus theoretically enhancing learning for the reader.

- Print on demand copies may yield some author royalties.

## Lessons Learned

Though this initiative remains a work in process, several lessons are apparent that can benefit others who might pursue similar partnerships.

**Organizational cultures.** Successful collaboration is dependent on recognizing and respecting the differences in organizational cultures among partners. When OSU Press came into the Libraries in 2007, its staff had been on the defensive while the campus figured out its future. Such a mindset does not always lend itself to risk-taking. When the Press became part of the Libraries, an organization with a history and organizational culture of innovation, their comfort level had to be increased in order for the Press to feel safe stepping out to do new things. The open textbook publishing initiative reflects a new level of organizational integration at OSULP. As the project moves forward, Library personnel and OER staff will also have to learn about the structure and process of creating a well-designed, peer-reviewed monograph from the Press.

**Duplication of effort.** Each partner brings respective strengths and weaknesses to the table with an overarching need to avoid duplication of effort. OSULP has a strong emerging technologies unit of its own but the Ecampus OER unit has more substantial experience with the creation of learning modules and multimedia components, thus making the OER unit a better choice for developing the interactive content.

**Organizational capacity.** It is important to consider a unit's capacity for new projects and to check on this regularly. When the initiative was first conceived in 2013, the OSU Press was fully staffed. However, a retirement in late 2013 resulted in two back-to-back openings, a tremendous challenge for a staff with 4 FTE. As a result, the Press may consider more outsourcing of editorial and design work in the open textbook project while a new managing editor assumes oversight for book projects already in the queue. Outsourcing costs would be part of the OSUL in-kind contribution to the project.

**Workflow management.** Collaboration often takes longer than working solo. One central challenge is managing the workflow of two units who will make different but related contributions to the textbook. Since the primary versions of the open textbooks are online and interactive, authors are working with the OER unit on those elements while simultaneously writing the text. This arrangement inherently impacts how quickly the final manuscript will be completed with all of its multimedia features. The Press is used to

receiving an initial proposal, then the completed manuscript, to send out for review and eventual Editorial Board approval. Some of the authors in the initiative will have completed their texts before the multimedia components are all in place, requiring the Press to decide if the text-only manuscript should be reviewed first, with an expedited repeat of the process once all of the multimedia is added, or should the review process be delayed until text and multimedia are all finalized. Great flexibility and communication is required to manage the timing of the respective processes. Looking ahead, the project team will have to decide the best way to get both the interactive content and the text reviewed efficiently in one step rather than two.

**Targeted audience.** In producing an open textbook, it's important not to forget the true audience and determine how to effectively reach it. While students will be the end users, ultimately it is the faculty who must adopt the textbook for it to have the desired impact. The textbook project is aimed at OSU classes first and foremost, but also seeks for the books to be adopted at other universities, which will require effective marketing and discoverability strategies.

**Authors' expectations.** Researching, writing, and publishing a textbook requires author attention to be sustained over a longer period than researching and writing a journal article. Though the project team attempted to be clear about its expectations of authors and learn of their expectations of the project partners, it was still necessary to manage authors' expectations of what will be done for them versus what they will have to do for themselves. Authors who already have highly developed manuscripts in hand still need to work closely with the OER unit to create interactive content rather than expecting the OER unit to do this without author input. Unrealistic expectations about financial reward instead of intangible personal and professional rewards for contributing open and validated scholarly content to the higher education community also have to be managed in some cases.

## NEXT STEPS

Managing the publication of even four open textbooks is a challenge. Before the initial set of proposals was reviewed, inquiries were already received about when the next RFP would be issued. As the project team works through the initial pilot phase, it is already planning next steps that will likely include another call for proposals. This will likely continue to focus on the university's signature areas, but to maximize adoption at OSU the focus may shift to approaching departments instead of individual faculty members. Next steps will focus on:

**Sustainable and seamless publishing platforms.** In December 2013, OSULP hired a new Gray Family Chair for Innovative Library Services. This is a unique endowed position

among research libraries. For the next three to four years, one of the Chair's principal foci will be experimenting with publishing platforms to identify sustainable and seamless options for creating content. The platforms should cover the entire cycle from proposal through reviewing and editing to production and dissemination. Toward that end, open textbooks offer an opportunity to explore platforms that include workflows for peer reviewing, editing, and design, as well as the creation of interactive content.

As stated earlier, interest in publishing affordable or open textbooks is growing across higher education in the United States. The cost of textbooks is also an established concern for organizations like the Association for Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU). APLU lists textbook prices as one of the issues that has direct impact on its initiative to make higher education affordable. In its 2008 discussion paper, "University Tuition, Consumer Choice and College Affordability: Strategies for Addressing a Higher Education Affordability Challenge," the APLU proposed a framework for exploring ways to keep higher education affordable for a larger percentage of the population. One strategy within this framework focuses on cost-effective ways of delivering course content to keep tuition costs down (McPherson & Schulenberg, 2008). Though not spelled out in the paper's discussion, a central component of this APLU initiative should be collaborations among member schools or other higher education institutions to build inter-institutional course-delivery platforms that embed the means to create and disseminate high-quality, peer-reviewed OER material or open textbooks to be shared across institutions. Such systems could enable APLU institutions to assume greater control of curricular content in open distribution models. This approach could also leverage the developing expertise in library publishing and existing strengths among university presses and other campus entities like OSU's OER unit. Academic libraries are well-positioned to take the lead in initiating conversations about such models on their campuses and across institutions.

**Viable business models.** As stated earlier, the project's pilot phase was made possible from entrepreneurial funds provided by Ecampus. These funds originate from student tuition and fees for online programs offered by Ecampus. This money only pays for incentives for participating authors and does not cover the in-kind staff expenses from the OER unit or OSULP, especially from the Press. At present the work of the pilot project has to be assumed alongside other priorities.

As the university offers more courses, programs, and degrees online, it may be possible to partially or fully support the production of open textbooks on an ongoing basis through Ecampus redirecting student fees to the project, or implementing a nominal OER fee in place of textbooks costs. It is not clear what economic contributions the print-on-demand versions of the OSU textbooks might make. There will be a need to capture information

about the costs and time investments for producing a single textbook to better ascertain the number of titles such a publishing program can support on an ongoing basis. The creation of shared systems with other institutions could conceivably keep costs down.

Overall it remains imperative to link the value of the open textbook initiative to the educational objectives of OSU and the state of Oregon. Effectively demonstrating value could open the door for centralized funding from the university or state government to cover in-kind costs or program personnel. As of spring 2014, the Oregon legislature had only slightly explored centralized support for open textbook production. A 2012 report on textbook affordability was issued as a result of Oregon House Bill 4058. This report, which details recommendations and offers analysis of existing federal and state laws and projects related to textbooks, did not overtly recommend grants to centrally fund the production of OA textbooks (<http://www.oregon.gov/gov/docs/OEIB/HECC6.pdf>). However, as OSU's initiative and other projects within the state, like Portland State University Library's "PDX Open: Reducing Student Textbook Costs" or Lane Community College's OER Faculty Fellowship program, gain momentum, Oregon institutions will be positioned to collectively demonstrate their value and advocate for a centrally funded program like those established by Oregon's neighbors to the south and north (California and Washington).

**Tracking adoption.** One obvious way to demonstrate value is through tracking adoption of the textbooks within OSU as well as at other institutions. This process seems relatively straightforward at one's home institution. The author will typically be the adopter and will be familiar with any courses taught by their colleagues that employ the textbook. Tracking adoption elsewhere is a more challenging proposition. Download statistics provide only limited data that would require significant follow-up to confirm actual adoption in a course. One alternative would involve monitoring comments from adopters via repositories such as the University of Minnesota's Open Textbook library (<http://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks>). The payoffs of successfully tracking adoption, however, are immense. This information could enable analysis of how many students have benefited and how much money was saved in comparison to the cost of textbooks typically used in those courses.

## CONCLUSION

As the importance of open textbooks continues to grow in higher education, there are tremendous opportunities for academic libraries to become catalysts for positive change through engaging faculty on these issues. Academic librarians can be at the forefront of universities seeking to establish programs that facilitate the creation and adoption of open textbooks. The concept of libraries becoming publishers of open textbooks dovetails nicely with the emerging field of library publishing and its emphasis on Open Access. Just as a

commitment to the free exchange of information undergirds many libraries' involvement in Open Access journal publishing, the same principle should inform consideration of their entry into open textbook development. Open textbook publishing reinforces the compelling argument that academia needs to assume greater ownership of the distribution of the content it creates. Instead of giving that content away to external publishers so it can be sold back to students at often egregious prices, higher education could invest in systems that take advantage of library and press expertise surrounding the creation and dissemination of information in various formats.

While academic libraries can bring essential resources and expertise to the table, they should proactively look for collaborators in open textbook endeavors, especially university presses. The increasing mergers and connections among academic libraries and university presses offer fertile ground for open textbook publishing partnerships to take root. The Ithaka S+R report observes:

With state, federal and private funding invested in determining how to remedy an uneven marketplace and deliver high quality materials to students at reasonable cost, there may well be roles here for new players: the university presses who have close ties to authors, mission-based goals tied to scholarship and education, and basic business skills lacking in many of the early OER experiments; and for the academic libraries who are strong campus advocates for the teachers and especially the students whose plight they witness first-hand. (Maron, 2014, p. 12)

Those libraries that enjoy existing organizational relationships with university presses clearly have an advantage in launching such collaborations, but libraries at schools without presses should consider collaborating with presses or library publishing programs at other institutions.

Multi-university coordination will ultimately be a key to maximizing the scope and impact of libraries on open textbook publishing. This is true not only for finding appropriate partners, but also for ensuring the textbooks complement rather than duplicate each other. There is a natural tendency to focus on one's own campus in these kinds of initiatives, but experience shows that as in the broader field of library publishing, there is great benefit to be gained from approaching this work as institutional contributions to a greater cause with global impact. At Oregon State University Libraries and Press, open textbook publishing is viewed as an appropriate and strategic application of resources in support of the institutional mission and higher education in general. This partnership offers a model for other libraries to consider as they determine their own levels of engagement with open textbooks as part of their contribution to teaching and learning.

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