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Abstract

Outline and script of the author's section of a presentation given with Amanda Larson, Open Education Librarian, Pennsylvania State University, at the 2018 PaLA College & Research Division Spring Workshop entitled "Open Educational Resources in Pennsylvania Academic Libraries." Focused on ways of supporting OER adoption and creation by faculty, topics discussed include the beginnings of OER and Open Access on campus, the role of Gettysburg College's institutional repository, the design of a pilot faculty OER grant program, and identifying campus partners.

Keywords

Open Educational Resources, Open Access, OER, OA

Disciplines

Higher Education

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From Liberal Arts College to R1 University:
Supporting OER in Different Institutional Contexts

Co-presented with
Amanda Larson, Open Education Librarian, Pennsylvania State University
at the
PaLA College & Research Division Spring Workshop
“Open Educational Resources in Pennsylvania Academic Libraries”
May 24, 2018

Presentation Outline

I will begin at the beginning and open by discussing how the seeds for OER were planted at Gettysburg College.

How OER got started on campus

- Our efforts and successes around OER - indeed around open access issues in general - are grounded in Gettysburg College’s open access institutional repository, The Cupola.
- Launched in 2012 on bepress’s Digital Commons platform, The Cupola needed to be filled with work by students and faculty, the vast majority of whom were new to OA and IRs.
- Janelle Wertzberger, now the Director of Scholarly Communications, oversaw the setup and rollout of The Cupola and also took the lead in outreach efforts all over campus. With the help of her fellow librarians and the support of others on campus, Janelle ran a sustained promotion campaign to raise awareness about the benefits of open access and the ways that The Cupola could be used to

increase awareness of faculty work as well as provide potential readers a way around the paywalls put up by their publishers. Today, nearly every faculty member has at least one work in the repository and reporting new works to Scholarly Communications has become a standard step in the faculty's workflow.

- The Cupola just celebrated its sixth birthday and now has over 7,000 works and also hosts five undergraduate journals. Currently the most-downloaded work is actually a student essay from 2014 that has been downloaded just shy of 30,000 times.
- The second and third most downloaded works are actually OER created by one of our Computer Science faculty. One, uploaded in 2014, has more than 17,000 downloads, while the other, added in 2015, has been downloaded more than 19,000 times.
- This provides a natural segue into a brief discussion of where Gettysburg is today on its OER journey.

Context for current OER support

- Currently, there are approximately 10 faculty members who have used or are using OER in their courses
- These have primarily been adoptions of pre-existing OER, many from OpenStax or OpenIntro.
- We also have an English faculty member who switched from an expensive literary anthology to a reading list comprised of links to works in the public domain.
- And then there is the Computer Science faculty member who now has a total of 4 OERs, all of which are hosted by The Cupola.
- Many more faculty have expressed interest in OER and related OA issues. We have a list of almost 50 names and that represents about 15% of our total faculty.
- This growing interest in and usage of OER was a major driver behind the creation last year of the position of Scholarly Communications Librarian.

- I was hired to the position in July and not long afterward began drafting plans for a pilot grant program to support faculty who want to experiment with OER.
- Just as I was getting started, I had the good fortune to join the inaugural cohort of the SPARC OER Leadership program. I will speak a bit about that experience at the end of my remarks, but for now I would like to simply say that the plan I now intend to propose for Gettysburg has changed and improved greatly as a result of the feedback provided by the members of my SPARC cohort and my assigned mentor, Sarah Crissinger Hare, now at Indiana University.

OER grant initiative

- My initial idea was to start small. Perhaps offer stipends to faculty for writing reviews of OER in their discipline in the hope that this would lead to more adoptions as it has at other schools.
- At conferences, via email, and in our SPARC cohort, I have heard a number of colleagues make three points regarding OER grant programs:
 - a. First, Grant money was often left on the table by faculty who did not see the benefit to them or could not justify spending valuable time on work that would not be recognized by tenure and promotion committees.
 - b. Second, that when they did apply for a grant and were given a choice, faculty almost always elected to apply for a large grant for funding OER creation rather than adoption or adaption
 - c. And third, I learned that there are very few OER grant programs at liberal arts colleges, and some that had been started, like the one at Davidson in North Carolina, have folded for lack of continuing faculty interest.
- I wondered if there was a need to design an OER grant program differently within a liberal arts college context and wondered why one does not see many successful examples out there.
- The vast majority of OER grant programs have been launched at R1s and community colleges. This makes sense for a variety of reasons, many of which

have to do with the effects of scale. At institutions that have many large survey courses employing commercial textbooks, switching just one of them to an OER can save students thousands of dollars. Recognizing that schools would be interested in achieving the greatest savings for the largest number of their students, companies like OpenStax focused on the production of introductory textbooks for the major fields taught at most schools. It is therefore relatively easy for a Biology professor using The Campbell Biology textbook to find a good substitute for it. And in the case of the OpenStax Bio textbook for majors, adoption is made even easier by virtue of OpenStax having followed the same organization as the Campbell, part by part, chapter by chapter, section by section. You can imagine how much easier this makes things for the instructor, who now does not have to rearrange his entire syllabus and weekly plan.

- Contrast this situation with that of the professor teaching an advanced Biology course, perhaps on the flora and fauna of Central Pennsylvania, that is cross-listed with Environmental Studies because the course will focus on interactions between the natural and manmade worlds over the last century. This faculty member will have difficulty determining which texts to require her students to purchase, let alone finding open ones that she can assign individually or edit into one. While she may not need to write all of the open content herself, she will certainly have to compile information from sources with which she is likely unfamiliar (like Wikipedia, old texts no longer under copyright, and new open texts) if she is not simply going to produce a coursepack that violates copyright law. Since she has taught this course many times and plans to continue to do so, she certainly sees the benefit of creating a textbook that would be affordable and customized to fit her students' needs. But she is not, and does not want to be a textbook author. Throw in the technological challenge of learning a new platform or piece of software needed to create the book and the project soon seems impractical, especially when her time could be spent writing other kinds of things

that her department actually values and will give her credit for when she applies for promotion.

- While liberal arts colleges like Gettysburg do have some large intro courses whose faculty and students could substitute an expensive commercial textbook with a free one from OpenStax or OpenIntro with relative ease, there are many more courses whose faculty are facing a situation similar to our hypothetical Biology professor. The question is, how do we best support them in their desire to switch to open educational resources.
- With that question in mind, I changed my proposal for an OER grant program to one focusing exclusively on OER creation. Faculty will still be encouraged to experiment with existing OER that could replace pricey texts in their courses, but the pilot program I will be proposing is aimed at faculty who are unhappy with their current books, believe a new OER could improve the course and the students' learning outcomes, and who may not be all that excited about learning the ins-and-outs of software designed to create new textbooks.
- To these faculty we will offer a good bit of money, but more importantly we will provide them with ongoing pedagogical, technological, and research support that will allow them to focus on content and course design. This is where the strategic partnerships can prove so vital to success. But before moving onto that section of my talk, let me tell you a bit more about my proposed pilot program.
- It will offer one grant of between 3 and 4 thousand dollars and recipients will have to work on the project over the summer with the goal of using the OER in a fall course. The recipient would also agree to her class's participation in an assessment program, to writing a report evaluating the program and the OER, and to participating in outreach efforts regarding raising awareness about the grant. We would also ask that the faculty member get a letter of support from the chairperson of the department, and that in that letter the chair agrees to offer that course again in the near future and using that OER. Throughout the term of the grant, the faculty member will be supported by us in Scholarly Communications

as well as by representative from the Johnson Center for Creative Teaching and Learning and our Office of Educational Technology. This brings me to the issue of identifying strategic partners on campus.

Identifying strategic partners

- The Teaching & Learning Center on your campus is a great partner to have because its staff can address issues of pedagogy and specifically the opportunities for assignments and course design that openly-licensed materials make possible. There is a tendency to focus on the admittedly important monetary savings that will result from switching to open and affordable learning materials. But just as important are the ways that student education and outcomes can be improved by taking full advantage of OER in terms of student-generated content, high-impact practices, and the ways that assigning OER offer a natural starting point for students to discuss questions of intellectual property, open access, and their role as both producers and consumers of knowledge.
- When instructors use OER in the same exact ways they used commercial texts, they deny their students the opportunity to engage with course content in new and more dynamic ways, ways that can lead to a better education in the long run. While this message may be heard when offered by a librarian, it can have much more power when it comes from a fellow faculty member, especially one affiliated with the campus teaching & learning center.
- The Office of Educational Technology is another potential partner in your support of faculty working with OER. As with the Learning & Teaching Center, this partnership does not need to require a major time commitment on the part of the educational technologist. I think of them as being “on call”: consulted about the program, kept up-to-date on its progress, and ready to provide you or your faculty member with trustworthy advice about software, platforms, and campus technology. Those of us who work at liberal arts colleges are accustomed to

wearing many different hats on a regular basis. It's part of the fun. But this also means that we can be spread quite thin and unable to assist a project if it requires a weekly commitment or attendance at regular meetings. As long as the librarian running the program is willing to take the lead and manage the process, I believe that she or he need be the only "full-time" administrator of the program.

- The bookstore is a key potential partner and can provide unique information and perspective on faculty course material selection history and motivations.
- [Discuss importance of our bookstore being independent and that most make their profits not from books but college paraphernalia like mugs and t-shirts. With the consent of campus administrators, they can provide historical data that can help make persuasive arguments about costs and connections with student performance, especially if cross-referenced with data from the Registrar.]

SPARC Open Education Leadership Program

- [Discuss my experience and what a wonderful learning and community building exercise it has been!]