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Student Textbook Surveys: An Important Component of a Library OER Initiative

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Student Textbook Surveys: An Important Component of a Library OER Initiative

Abstract

A student textbook survey is a potentially powerful tool in the OER advocate's toolkit. This moderated panel features librarians working within smaller settings and includes representatives from a small, private, liberal arts college, a small public Hispanic-serving institution, and a community college. Panelists will discuss survey goals, research design considerations, approaches to data analysis, and strategies for sharing results. Participants will gain concrete ideas about whether and how a student textbook survey could advance their local OER initiatives, as well as practical tips for how to move ahead with such a project.

Keywords

student textbook survey, textbook survey, OER, open educational resources, ACRL 2021

Disciplines

Library and Information Science | Scholarly Communication

Comments

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Student Textbook Surveys:

An Important Component of a Library OER Initiative

#acrlltextbooksurvey

(Janelle)

Welcome to **Student Textbook Surveys: An Important Component of a Library OER Initiative**. My name is Janelle Wertzberger. I am the Assistant Dean and Director of Scholarly Communications at Gettysburg College, and I will moderate today's session.

Recognizing that people will attend this virtual session from around the world, and that indeed, our panelists are not gathered in the same space, nevertheless I would like to begin with a land acknowledgement that references the place where I am as we record this in March, 2021.

As a member of the Gettysburg community, I respectfully acknowledge that Gettysburg College is on unceded Indigenous land including the traditional homelands of the Susquehannock/Conestoga, Seneca and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Leni Lenape (LEN-ay Luh-NAH-pay, and Shawnee Nations, and the connections of Indigenous Peoples to this land continue today. We have a responsibility to honor these connections and, as these words of acknowledgement are spoken and heard, we strive to understand our place within the past, present, and future of this Indigenous land by reflecting on our relationships with the human and other-than-human relatives with whom it is shared.

We (my co-speakers and I) created this panel after realizing that we had all conducted student textbook surveys, but had done so in very different ways and in different

academic settings. Today you'll hear from librarians at a small, public, Hispanic-serving institution in Colorado, a regional community college in Pennsylvania, and a small, private, residential liberal arts college in Pennsylvania. We hope that no matter how many resources you have to devote to OER or textbook affordability more broadly, you can find something useful that might advance your initiative.

Let's meet our panelists, starting with Amanda.

Amanda Langdon



Access Services & Distance
Learning Librarian

Adams State University

Small, public, Hispanic-serving
institution in Alamosa, CO

(Amanda)

Adams State University

- Colorado's first HSI, located in the San Luis Valley, home of the Great Sand Dunes
- enrollment as of Fall 2020 was 3,039 -- grad and undergrad
- 41% first generation; 44% are Pell Eligible (undergrad)
- Land Acknowledgement: *We, the Adams State University community, gratefully acknowledge the Indigenous peoples on whose ancestral lands we gather. The beautiful San Luis Valley is sacred to many Indigenous nations, including the Utes, Jicarilla [GEE-car-Yee-ah] Apaches, Comanches, Kiowas, Arapahoe, Cheyenne, Navajo Nation, Pueblos, and all other First peoples that once called the Valley home. We honor the diverse communities that historically dwelled there and those who currently reside in the San*

- *Luis Valley. We know that honoring these lands is a reflective process that demands continued engagement and action. May we always remember the journey of the past peoples who called our valley: “home.”*

Andrea Hartranft



Reference/Instruction
Librarian

Harrisburg Area
Community College

Community college in
Central PA

Mary Elmquist

Scholarly Communications
Librarian

Gettysburg College

Small, private, residential,
liberal arts college in
Gettysburg, PA

(Mary)

Gettysburg College

- Private, residential, undergraduate, liberal arts college in Gettysburg, PA
- 2,531 full-time, degree-seeking students in Fall 2020
- 22% first-generation students; 19% Pell Grant recipients

Project Goals

Why did you conduct a textbook survey?

What were your initial goals?

(Janelle)

We'll begin with the origin stories of our textbook survey projects. Starting with Amanda, can each of you tell us why you decided to conduct a student textbook survey? What were your initial goals?

(Amanda)

- I had written paper proposal identifying two gaps in the literature: the first was around student **voice**. Student **choices** are often analyzed in surveys, but I found little in the research to indicate students have much of a **voice**, a **say** in campus OER initiatives. Perhaps ironically, I went with a survey, but it was a means of *outreach*, of *engagement* with our students. It was a way of testing the waters to determine how future outreach at ASU might be tailored to *our* students' specific needs.
- The second gap identified was that small, rural schools are often missing from the literature, much of which analyzes OER initiatives at large Research institutions and state systems, with commensurately large budgets. Without those financial resources, I wanted to see a grassroots movement towards OER advocacy from our students.

- ASU's OER initiative is just starting; we're at least 2 years behind the rest of the state, so this survey was really a starting point for the whole OER initiative as a concerted, coordinated program. How about you, *AND-rea*

(Mary)

- **Collect local data:** Prior to this survey, the Schol Comm team often used results from Florida's Student Textbook and Course Materials Surveys to talk about OER, but received pushback from faculty who felt that our student population differed significantly from the public college and university students surveyed in Florida. So, it was important to us to be able to present this information in a way that couldn't be so easily dismissed.
- **Understand vulnerable populations:** We asked fairly robust demographic questions, because we knew we wanted to see if there were any groups more affected by textbook costs than others.
- **Expand and improve OER outreach on campus:** Putting those first two goals together, we really wanted to be able to take what we learned and be better able to serve students and faculty in future OER programs. We knew from the start that OER benefit student success, but with the specifically local data and some understanding of the most affected students on campus, we hoped we would gain the context to set even more meaningful goals.

Project Parameters

- Platform
 - Audience
 - Timing
 - Data analysis
-

(Janelle)

Now let's dig into the details. Each panelist will share some key project parameters, including details like the platform used for administering the survey, the target audience for the survey, the timing of administering the survey, and their plan for analyzing the resulting data. This last piece is one people who are considering doing their own survey will be especially interested in. Did you analyze the data yourself, or did you have help? If you had help, what kind? What skills were needed to understand the data?

Let's start again with Amanda.

Project Parameters - Adams State University

Platform: Google Forms

Timing:

- 1) Summer (Jul) 2019
- 2) Spring (Feb/Mar) 2020
- 3) Spring (Jan/Feb) 2021

Target Audience: All students

Data Analysis: Rudimentary but sufficient; conducted by me

- My initial survey was pretty bare-bones.
- My final article proposal was accepted by the International J. of Open Ed Res. on July 3, 2019. The full paper (including data) was due by Aug. 7. I used some pre-drafted survey questions (slightly modified) and obtained IRB approval in early July.
- I used Google Forms for the survey platform. The automatic exporting of data into a spreadsheet helped me collate and analyze responses, and the graphics included in the “survey results” tab helped with visual presentation of the data.
- The timing, to be honest, was terrible: the end of the summer, after the 2018-2019 academic year was finished, before the start of the Fall 19-20 school year.
- My audience was any student willing to take the time to answer: undergrad, graduate, post-grad, on- or off-campus. I was truly pleased with our 159 (~5%) results, given the timing. I collected a handful of responses in person, but the majority came from a blast email invitation, containing the Google Forms link. One reminder email with the link was sent out.
- I did the data analysis myself, that part that wasn't done by Google Forms. I don't have any training in data-analysis, so it was, as I said, very rudimentary, but entirely sufficient for my needs. Follow-up surveys have been administered Spring 2020 (162 responses) and Spring 2021 (288 responses, nearly 9.5%) with the same parameters. This last survey had faculty encouragement due to a happy accident, but I think our otherwise low turnout is due to survey fatigue.

On to **AND**-rea

Project Parameters - Harrisburg Area Community College

Platform: Qualtrics

Target Audience: College-wide survey sent to 16,000 students

Timing: Institutional Research schedule

- OER Survey
 - April 2019 & March 2021
 - Reminder one week later
 - Open for two weeks
- Pre and Post OER Surveys given end of each semester

Data Analysis: One hour meeting with Institutional Research

Project Parameters - Gettysburg College

Platform: LimeSurvey

Timing: ~~Spring 2019~~ Early Fall 2019 (open 3 weeks)

Audience: All current students

Data Analysis:

- SPSS (with help!)
- Categorized free-text responses and quotes

I want to preface my discussion on the parameters for our survey by saying that our most important resource was our team! Of our four person group, three of us worked in the Library—myself, Janelle, and Sarah Appedu, and we also partnered with a trained statistician at our institution, Sharon Birch. Everything from the survey platform we chose to the scale of data analysis we were able to do came down the skills and dedication of our whole team.

- We chose to use LimeSurvey, an open-source, online survey tool as our platform. It allowed for the things we needed, like anonymization and easy data export for our analysis. It also didn't put limits on the number of questions we could ask or the number of responses we could collect.
- To speak on timing, originally, the plan was to run this survey concurrent with Open Ed Week 2019, but the team discovered that our campus bookstore had run their own survey shortly before that. To avoid confusion and survey burnout, we moved our survey to the first three weeks of the Fall 2019 semester. We think this ended up being for the best—we got students right after they had purchased textbooks, and their concerns and costs were fresh in their minds.
- We chose to advertise our survey to *all* students—we used pretty much every campus advertising space we could think of and incentivized with a drawing for a dining services gift card. This may be more related to data analysis, but it's worth noting that this did affect the way we were able to talk about our

- results—we didn't seek or get a statistically representative sample, but with our small student body, we were more concerned about getting as many responses as possible.
- Our data analysis was (in my opinion) pretty robust for a single-institution survey and a team of our size—and more than a lot of folks may need. We had access to SPSS, software designed for statistical analysis in the social sciences, and because we were working with a statistician, we were able to get training on how to use it. There *were* limits on what kinds of analysis we could do, statistically speaking, because of the non-representativeness of our sample. That said, the great benefit of using this more powerful tool was that we were able to easily cross-reference the responses to questions within the body of the survey with demographic responses and make comparisons across demographic groups. This is something that was important to us, and this level of analysis may be valuable to you and your institution, depending on the questions you want to ask. I'll also add that some of our questions allowed students to answer in free-response boxes. We did some light thematic coding—much more like categorization—on these responses to pull out repeated, meaningful themes. This also really helped us to pull out exemplary quotes when we presented our results.

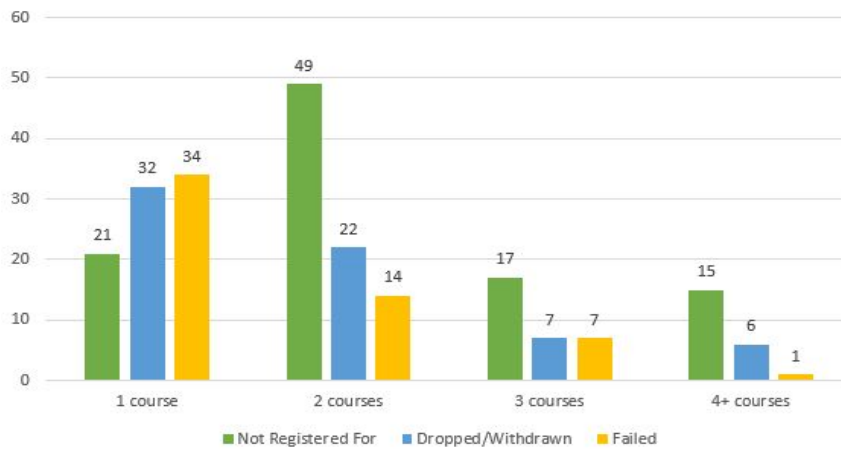
Key Takeaways

Findings in soundbyte form!

(Janelle)

While this presentation is not primarily about what we each learned from our respective textbook surveys, we do want to give you a peek into our results. If you had to distill your most important findings, how would you express them?

Key Takeaway 1 - Adams State University



How many courses have you ___ due to materials costs?

*Note: this data comes from our Spring 2021 survey.

How many courses have you (not registered for / dropped or withdrawn from / failed) due to materials costs?

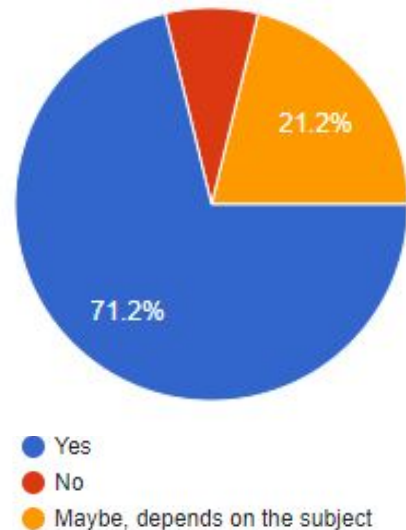
1 course = 30.2%; 2 courses = 29.5%; 3 courses = 10.8%; 4+ courses = 7.6%

Greater enrollment, greater retention, and greater engagement are possible if textbook/materials costs were not so high.

The first two points can be directed to Administration, the last two points can be directed to faculty.

Key Takeaway 2 - Adams State University

If faculty told you they'd reworked the course to incorporate a free textbook (to save you money), would you be more likely to read it?



*This question also comes from our Spring 2021 survey.

Faculty -- what could you do with much more engagement? How could this impact classroom/student success?




How about you, *And-ree-ah*

Key Takeaway 1 - Harrisburg Area Community College

Answer	1	2	3	Total Responses
Pre-printed, unbound copy that you can keep (\$2 - \$20)	405	314	283	1002
Digital download you can keep (free)	381	295	225	901
Professionally printed & bound copy that you have to return (less expensive than keeping new/used copy)	206	255	197	658

Students were asked to rank their top 3 textbook format choices based on cost

Key Takeaway 2 - Harrisburg Area Community College

Answer	Bar	Response	%
Yes		815	56.3%
Maybe		513	35.4%
No		120	8.3%
Total		1448	100.0%

If your textbooks cost significantly less or were free, would you be willing/able to enroll in additional courses at HACC?



Key Takeaways - Gettysburg College

- 2/3 of respondents spent **over \$200**
- **First-generation** students and **Pell Grant** more negatively affected by high costs
- **\$50** is a reasonable price for **one class**

We had a few key takeaways:

- First, we got an idea of how much our students were spending. About 2/3 of our respondents spent over \$200 on books in Fall 2019, and the most common answer was \$300. We also learned that first year students spent the most on average, at about \$340. We also found that financial aid wasn't helping very much. Only about 8% of all respondents said they had anything left to spend on books.
- We asked about both the strategies students used to save on book costs and effects they felt from high costs. In both of these areas, we found meaningful differences in the ways that the first-generation students and Pell Grant recipients responded, in comparison to participants not in those groups. Perhaps most impactfully, first-gen students were almost twice as likely as their counterparts to say they struggled academically due to book costs and Pell Grant recipients about 3 times as likely to say so.
- And finally, we got a better sense of what affordable meant on our campus. We asked students what they thought was a reasonable price for all materials in a single class, and the average response was \$50. This has proven to be a really helpful number to have when talking about affordability on a local scale.

...and then what?

What happened *after*
you shared survey
results on your
campus?

(Janelle)

We also want to leave you with a sense of the **impact** of our textbook surveys. What happened after you shared results on your campus?

Then what? Adams State University

- OER Initiative has started snowballing, and I'm becoming recognized as the campus lead on OER.
- Raising awareness of open education on campus.
- Developed & chairing Open Ed Committee

(Amanda)

- The effects are snowballing. I'm getting my name out there as THE campus OER person. Faculty who are interested in adopting/exploring OER have reached out to me, as have faculty who had been using OER before (under the radar, due to silo-ing). I'm trying to break down those silos and act as a resource for both existing users and potential adopters.
- I have increased my outreach (insofar as Covid has allowed) in the form of informational sessions, and have established an Open Education Committee on campus including instructional design, administration, faculty across multiple departments, and a librarian chair.
- Next goal: obtain Administrative permission for the campus' OER initiative to be an Approved priority, which includes fundraising/financial support. While we are still behind the rest of the state -- and the pandemic certainly hasn't helped -- I can say with confidence that we are at

- last moving in the right direction!
- *And-ree-ah*

Then what? Harrisburg Area Community College

- OER became a part of the college strategic plan for 2019-2022
- OER Committee formed with two co-chairs and over 20 members
- Secured over \$135,000 for faculty OER developers
- Support from faculty, administration and others
 - Don't do it on your own!

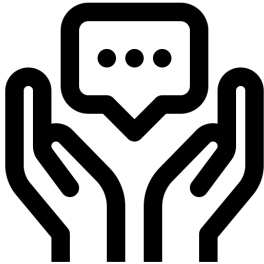
Then what? Gettysburg College

- Even **before we had results**, the survey kickstarted conversations
- COVID-19 puts a spotlight on issues of **access and equity**
- The future: moving **beyond the library?**

- The results from our survey have really been the basis for our OER work in a lot of ways, even from before we had all the data analysis completed. The campus-wide advertising of the survey, in conjunction with one-on-one discussions we were having with folks all over campus, really seemed to bring the topic of affordability to the forefront for some administrators. So, this eventually led to an invitation to speak at a Faculty Meeting in late 2019, and that helped to further draw attention to the presentation of our results in February and programming for Open Ed Week 2020...and then immediately following, we had Spring Break...and then campus shut down.
- I don't think it's particularly surprising to hear that the pandemic slowed down OER efforts for a little while. In the first few months, when many instructors were teaching online for the first time, everyone was much more in a kind of triage mode to get the basics down and make it to summer. The issues of textbook affordability and access had been further highlighted in the sudden move-out, and we had some professors who had never given OER a real shot before, but who were now suddenly interested in adopting an open book. And that has really just continued since last summer. With the support of our wonderful Teaching and Learning Center on campus, Gettysburg has also seen the implementation of our first OER adoption grant program—something we really didn't think would be a possibility for a while yet.
- Our results have also really given us the chance to start attempting to shift the center of the affordability conversation outside of the library. This is something we're actively involved in right now—but with a better understanding of how textbook costs impact our students, we're really better able to target our pitches to different campus groups—our multicultural center, bookstore, academic advising, etc. We're hoping to

- get a campus-wide affordability initiative in place, and though we're still in early stages, I don't think we'd even be as far along as we are without the results from our survey!

If you want to do this...



Created by Ayub Irawan
from Noun Project

<https://bit.ly/3buBXVL>

- Survey questions that can be reused, revised, remixed
- Additional resources about our respective projects

(Janelle)

We're coming to the end of our session, so this is a good time to share documentation and resources. We have compiled LOTS of useful stuff in a public folder for you, including the questions we each used in our respective surveys. Please reuse, revise, and remix them - and then share the results! We want MORE student textbook survey data in the world. You'll also find links to presentations and publications about our survey projects. Some focus on detailed findings, while others are more about the process of conducting a survey.

So to close us out... Clearly, we've all found that conducting a textbook survey is an important component of a larger OER initiative. If you could go back in time and offer your past self some wisdom that you gained as a result of this work - wisdom that would also be useful to our attendees who may be embarking on a similar journey - what would it be?

(Amanda)

- Don't wait until everything is lined up, perfect situation -- it'll never happen. Just go with it. The worst that can happen is that you'll have something to edit or work with going forward (as a writer, this is always essential advice).
- Consider your needs, specifically. Keep your questions on topic -- ours jumped around a lot touching on a lot of different topics -- it

- wasn't until later drafts that I narrowed down our focus to address specific factors to address with administration and faculty.
- At the same time, don't be afraid to change up your questions based on the answers you get, and your evolving needs.