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## Open Textbooks: Access, Affordability, Inclusion, and Academic Success

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# Open Textbooks: Access, Affordability, Inclusion, and Academic Success

## Abstract

Are you curious about how a textbook choice can influence students' sense of belonging and their academic success?

Open textbooks are full, real textbooks used by many professors here at Gettysburg and across the U.S. They are completely free to access online and also free of most copyright restrictions, meaning it's legal to copy, share, edit, mix, keep and use those materials. Adopting an open textbook ensures that all students have immediate access to a zero-cost book and provides faculty 100% control over their learning materials. Attend this workshop to learn more about how an open textbook may align with your learning goals and commitment to inclusion and belonging.

After the workshop, participants will be invited to write a short review of an open textbook they might assign in a course (please note: open textbooks are not available for all subjects). Your review will be shared in the [Open Textbook Library](#) so it may benefit other faculty considering open textbooks.

## Keywords

open textbooks, open educational resources, oer, belonging, access, student success

## Disciplines

Scholarly Communication

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# Open Textbooks

Access, Affordability, Inclusion,  
and Academic Success

Presented by :  
Janelle Wertzberger and Mary Elmquist, Musselman  
Library

Supported by:  
Johnson Center for Creative Teaching and Learning  
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[introductions]

Some of you have heard us talk about textbook costs and textbook affordability in other venues. Textbook affordability is a big umbrella, and today we're going to focus on a smaller topic that lives under that umbrella: open textbooks, or Open Educational Resources (OER).

[don't read but these are our Learning Goals!]

By the end of the session, you should:

- Be familiar with the financial context that affects student choices and their academic experience
- Understand the benefits that both learners and teachers can get from using OER
- Feel empowered to choose OER as a strategy to improve teaching and learning

## Today:

- College costs, textbook market trends, and impact on students
- An alternative: Open Educational Resources
- Benefits of OER for learners
- Benefits for teachers
- Choosing open



Here's a quick overview of what we'll cover today –

- College costs and textbook market trends – these can be barriers to learning
- Open Educational Resources as a way to sidestep the effects of that market
- Benefits of OER for learners, and pedagogical benefits for teachers
- Some practical tips on how to consider using OER, and how to choose an open textbook

## Gettysburg College costs 2022-23

Item	Cost
Tuition	\$61,760
Room	\$8,010
Meal plan	\$6,920
Books and supplies	\$1,000
Transportation	\$1,500
Personal and miscellaneous expenses	\$1,210
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$80,400</b>



Source: <https://www.gettysburg.edu/admissions-aid/tuition-fees/>

Let's start by acknowledging that it costs a lot of money to attend Gettysburg College. This is from the Admissions website. These are the major expense categories for students. The first 3 are on the bill and must be paid, while the last 3 are included in financial aid packages (if eligible) but are up to individual students to manage. They can't trim anything off tuition, but they can trim in other areas... including books.

## Books and supplies

Students are told to budget **\$500/semester**

Students actually spend\* **\$330/semester**

Students say is reasonable\* **\$200/semester**

\*Gettysburg College student textbook survey, Fall 2019

Here is where things start to get interesting. We know that students are told to budget \$1000 per year for books and supplies. That's \$500/semester.

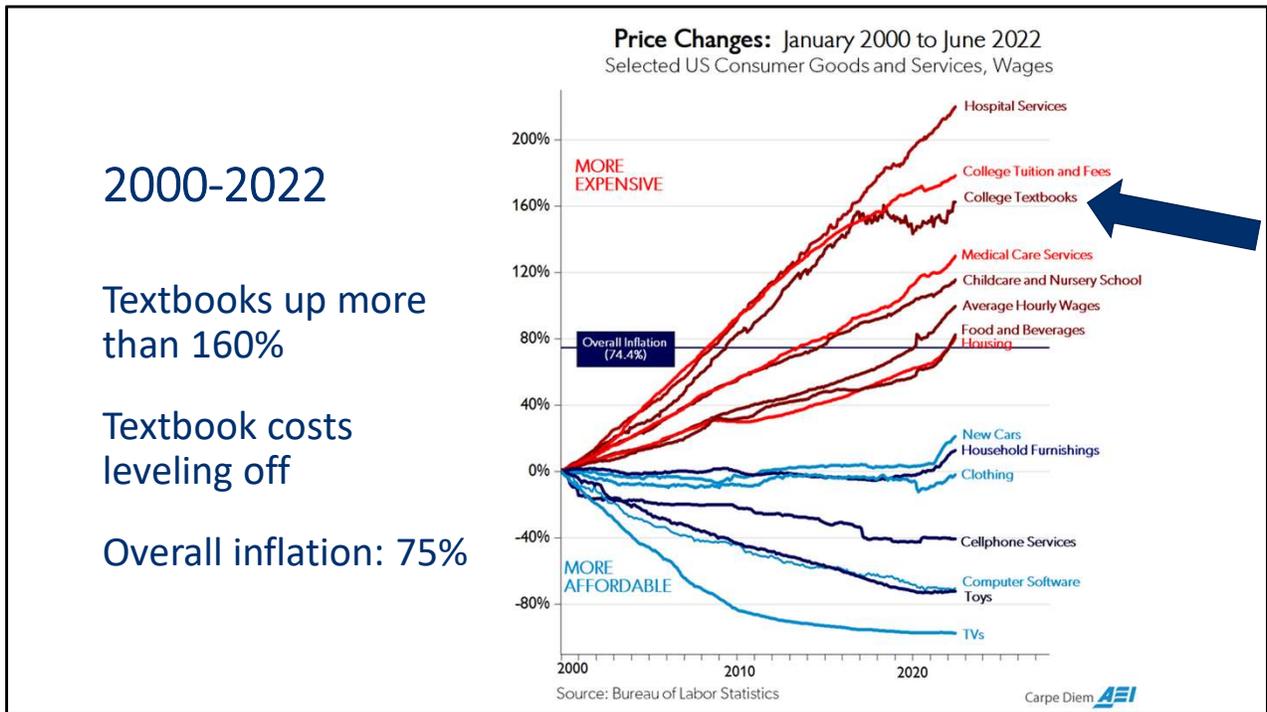
What do YOU think they should be spending in a semester? Anyone want to share?

What do you think they actually spend? [CLICK] We asked them in a survey conducted in Fall 2019, and the mean response was \$330/semester.

We also asked them what they think is a reasonable price to pay for ALL the books and materials in a single class. [CLICK] Our median answer was \$50/class, or \$200/semester for a standard full load.

By the way, we ran this survey again during the first three weeks of this semester. We should have data to share later this fall or in the spring.

So - We know that students are spending less than we think they should spend. Now let's look more closely at the textbook market and what's going on.



This is a busy graph; the takeaway is that textbooks are expensive. These data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show how prices have changed in the past 22 years. [CLICK] Note that college textbooks and college tuition are way up top – the only thing that tops them is hospital services. Inflation over this time period has been about 75% (most of that very recent), but textbook prices are up more than 160%.

One piece of good news is that textbook costs have sort of leveled off in the past 5 years or so. I would argue that this is partly in response to pressure placed on the commercial publishing industry by the open education movement, and also by the fact that students simply won't buy books at a certain point.

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Source: <https://www.aei.org/carpe-diem/chart-of-the-day-or-century-8/>

## Textbook prices are tricky!



### Textbook Giant Pearson Makes Major Shift Away From Print to Digital

London-based Pearson is the largest provider of college textbooks in the U.S.

By *Lauren Camera*, Senior Education Writer | July 15, 2019



### Do 'Inclusive Access' Textbook Programs Save Students Money? A New Site Urges Everyone to Read the Fine Print

By *Taylor Swaak* | OCTOBER 11, 2021

The textbook market is volatile and it can be challenging to keep up with trends, especially since the publishing industry frequently tries to frame new programs as affordability solutions. I once heard someone say “what hurts you can’t heal you” and that might apply here. Can we trust the industry that made the problem to solve it?

I want to share just two examples of these so-called solutions.

[click] Textbook publisher Pearson announced that they will update all U.S. titles in digital format ONLY. From Pearson’s perspective, this move will provide more current information to students at a lower price. From the perspective of professors and students, it means print editions are no longer available for most titles - despite print being a format preference of some students. In the student textbook survey we conducted with Gettysburg students in 2019, 86% of respondents preferred print books. It’s also important to recognize that all digital books means that students can’t sell and buy used books, as digital materials cannot be resold in the U.S. Going digital completely removes the option of buying a used book or reselling a used book....or will it? Pearson’s latest announcement is that they are looking at blockchain and NFTs to allow resale of digital items in such a way the publisher is paid again with every sale. This is new territory in book sales.

[CLICK] Next, there is something called “inclusive access,” which sounds good. We want

students to be included and to have access, right? But what publishers call “inclusive access” is what students and librarians call “automatic textbook billing.” These materials are usually digital-only and are made available to all students on the first day of class. Students are billed for them without being given a chance to use cost-saving strategies to lower or eliminate their direct costs.

I could go on about all the tricky things happening in the textbook market now. I’ll stop there, though. Suffice it to say that students trying to navigate this marketplace in order to save money can quickly experience confusion and cognitive overload. The prices are high and the shopping experience is perplexing, and this has an impact on students. What is that impact?

## How textbook costs impact students



Source:  
2018 Florida Student Textbook & Course Materials Survey

Here are some data about how those costs impact students academically. If you don't have the learning materials, you're not going to learn as well or perform as well in the classroom. These data are from the latest version of the Florida Student Textbook & Course Materials Survey, done in 2018 (it was previously conducted in 2016, 2012, and 2010). The survey audience is 21,400 students from all of Florida's public higher education institutions, which admittedly includes institutions unlike ours. However, the textbook affordability community often cites these results because of the magnitude of the study. This shows how students COPE with high book prices...before the pandemic and before the rapid inflation we've experienced this year.

Source: <https://dlss.flvc.org/colleges-and-universities/research/textbooks>

## How textbook costs impact students



Are all required books used at some point in an academic career?



Source:  
2018 Florida Student Textbook & Course Materials Survey

Here are some survey results that get to the heart of what you do as faculty. Over a third of the Florida respondents felt they earned a poor grade because of the cost of materials, and 20% failed a course.

At the same time, students sounded off about how many books were required and purchased, yet never used. (Caveat: we don't know if "never used" means the professor never got to them, or readings were assigned but the students just didn't crack the book, or students didn't use the book because it wasn't necessary, due to content shared in lectures or in the LMS, perhaps.)

<https://dlss.flvc.org/colleges-and-universities/research/textbooks>

## Gettysburg College Student Textbook Survey

	All responses	First-gen	NOT First-gen	Pell Grant	NO Pell Grant
Share books with a classmate	16.4%	<b>20.5%</b>	13.7%	<b>20.7%</b>	14.7%
Only purchase some of the required books	15.8%	<b>18.8%</b>	15.0%	<b>19.8%</b>	14.7%
Check out from the library	11.6%	11.6%	11.3%	<b>16.2%</b>	10.4%
Struggle academically	14.6%	<b>22.3%</b>	11.1%	<b>27.0%</b>	8.7%

What about local data, you say? We have some of that, too. This is from the student textbook survey we conducted in fall 2019.

We looked at the way that students cope with textbook costs—the strategies they use to try to decrease the price they pay. We found that a lot of students who participated use the kinds of methods you might expect: renting books (both from the campus bookstore and off-campus sources) or buying and selling in the used marketplace. But we also saw some more drastic strategies, like sharing books with a classmate, checking out books from the library, and only purchasing some of their required books. These ways of coping were more likely to be used by first-generation students and especially by students who said they received Pell Grants over their peers who did not fall into those categories.

As a quick reminder: who are Pell students? The federal government says “students with exceptional financial need” are eligible for Pell, which is kind of vague. Other sources say students with family household income below \$50,000/year are eligible, but most Pell grants go to students with family income under \$20,000/year (source: <https://www.scholarships.com/financial-aid/grants/federal-grants/>)

[CLICK] When we asked about the effects of textbook costs, we found was that students in those same high-need groups were more likely to struggle academically due to the high costs of books. First-gen students were twice as likely to struggle as their non-first-gen counterparts, and Pell grant recipients were more than *three times* more likely than non-Pell respondents to face academic struggles.

## 2022 Campus Climate Survey

### Student Financial Hardship

38% ( $n = 132$ ) of Student respondents indicated they experienced financial hardship while attending Gettysburg College (p. 48). Students indicated they experienced financial hardship in the following areas.

- **65% ( $n = 86$ ) had difficulty purchasing books/course materials**
- 64% ( $n = 85$ ) had difficulty affording tuition
- 39% ( $n = 51$ ) had difficulty affording food
- 38% ( $n = 50$ ) had difficulty affording travel to and from Gettysburg College

One more data point on affordability –

I would be remiss if I didn't include findings from our most recent Campus Climate Survey. We just received results last week. Even though the overall number of student responses to the survey was low, we still heard from 86 who said they had difficulty purchasing books and course materials.

I should also note that so far, we're only talking about affordability! There are other educational equity issues outside of affordability that affect student academic performance and classroom experience.

## Belonging

- White Student respondents had higher *Student Sense of Belonging* scores than those of Student Respondents of Color.
- Not-First-Generation Student respondents had higher *Student Sense of Belonging* scores than those of First-Generation Student respondents
- Not-Low-Income Student respondents had higher *Student Sense of Belonging* scores than those of Low-Income Student respondents

Source: 2022 Gettysburg College Campus Climate Survey

We need to bring the concept of “belonging” into this conversation.

We’ve talked a little bit about students having to deal with the high cost of college and additional textbook costs as well as the academic impact those barriers have on students. But I also want us to consider, for example, the psychological messages we send to students. When a student struggles with the cost of required course materials, or flat out can’t manage them, how could they possibly feel like they belong on this campus? And when they do access the textbook, if they find that it doesn’t represent their lived experience or their body, is it likely they will feel that they belong here?

[click] These are statistically significant findings from our 2022 Campus Climate Survey. We know that students of color, first-generation students, and low-income students do not experience the same sense of belonging as students not in those categories.

We want our classrooms to be a place where all students feel they belong. Sometimes textbook choices work against that goal.

## OER: Open Educational Resources



Today, we're excited to share with you the ways the Open Educational Resources can address issues of affordability AND belonging.

Hand off to MARY

So, with our students' situations in mind, let's switch gears to talk about what *instructors* can do. One of the options is what we're here to talk about today: open educational resources and open textbooks.

For many professors, the easiest and most lasting approach to get to a \$0 course cost (or at least close to it) is to adopt an OER. OER are completely free to access online and, for reasons we'll get to in a minute, are designed to *stay* free. There are other ways you may be able to REDUCE the cost of your course materials, but OER are absolutely zero cost—no strings attached. Using OER can make your classroom a more equitable place, where your students can start the semester with the knowledge they're on the same footing as their classmates as far as the textbook is considered. So, we're going to focus on OER today as a best case scenario.

# Is there an academic impact?

University of Georgia

Change from non-OER to OER

	$\Delta$ Grade	$\Delta$ DFW
Non-Pell eligible students	+6.9%	-2.05%
Pell eligible students	+10.98%	-4.43%
All Students	+8.6%	-2.68%

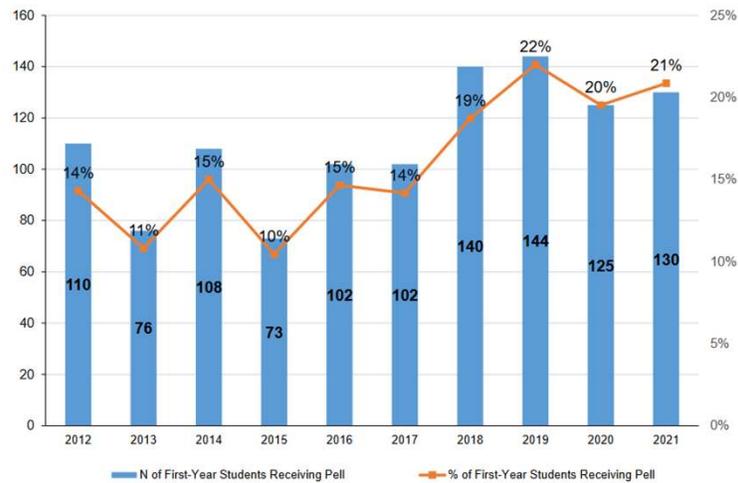
Colvard, N. B., Watson, C. E., & Park, H. (2018). The Impact of Open Educational Resources on Various Student Success Metrics. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 30(2), 262–276.

Research shows that shifting from a commercial textbook to OER can make a big difference. This 2018 study from the University of Georgia shows that while all students benefit from courses shifting from commercial textbooks to OER (with better grades and lower rates of Ds, Fs, and withdrawals), Pell-eligible students benefit the most. Remember, from our textbook survey: we found that Pell Grant recipients were three times more likely to struggle academically because of textbook costs over their non-Pell peers.

Students from households with this level of family income are among our most vulnerable. As we saw earlier, these are the students who are likely to struggle with buying a \$100 or \$200 book for one class (or six \$15 books for one class).

How many Pell students are in your classes?

## Pell Grant Recipients in the First-Year Cohort



[https://www.gettysburg.edu/offices/institutional-analysis/pdfs/public-fact-book/2021-22/PellRecipients\\_2021.pdf](https://www.gettysburg.edu/offices/institutional-analysis/pdfs/public-fact-book/2021-22/PellRecipients_2021.pdf)

This graph is from the Gettysburg College Fact Book. In Fall 2022, 129 first-year students have Pell grants.

In our entire student body, about 20% of all students have Pell grants this year (according to our Financial Aid Director). Given the demographic and enrollment projections for higher education, this number is likely to go up in future years.

Teaching a zero-cost class, whether or not you use OER, can be expected to positively impact student learning in our community.

Sociology department tree,  
December 2019



But we also like to talk about adopting OER as one of the most *sustainable* options for instructors. Many faculty switch to OER because as they see it, the updates commercial publishers push with new editions don't always square with the corresponding price increases. Or they know information is missing from commercial textbooks. Or they want to customize their course by relying less on a single commercial text and bringing in additional materials. They want the academic freedom to fully control their readings and other learning materials, to change them how and when *they* want to change them, rather than when commercial publishers do. They want to control the means of production.

## OER: Free + Permissions

Permissions =  
copy, share, edit,  
mix, keep, use



In addition to being free to read and use, OER are free of most copyright restrictions, meaning it's legal to copy, share, edit, mix, keep, and use those materials. So, in addition to the financial benefits to students, many instructors see pedagogical benefits from adopting OER.

Note that “copy” means you can print and reproduce—some learners prefer print materials and open textbooks *can* be printed! Some providers have created high-quality, low-cost print editions like the ones we brought along. Even if there isn't one of these for your course, you can print a book yourself or have the campus print shop make copies—completely legally. You can also retain as many copies of the book as you want, both physically and digitally. So you'll never have to worry about a publisher cutting off access to a particular book or edition as they move to digital-only models.

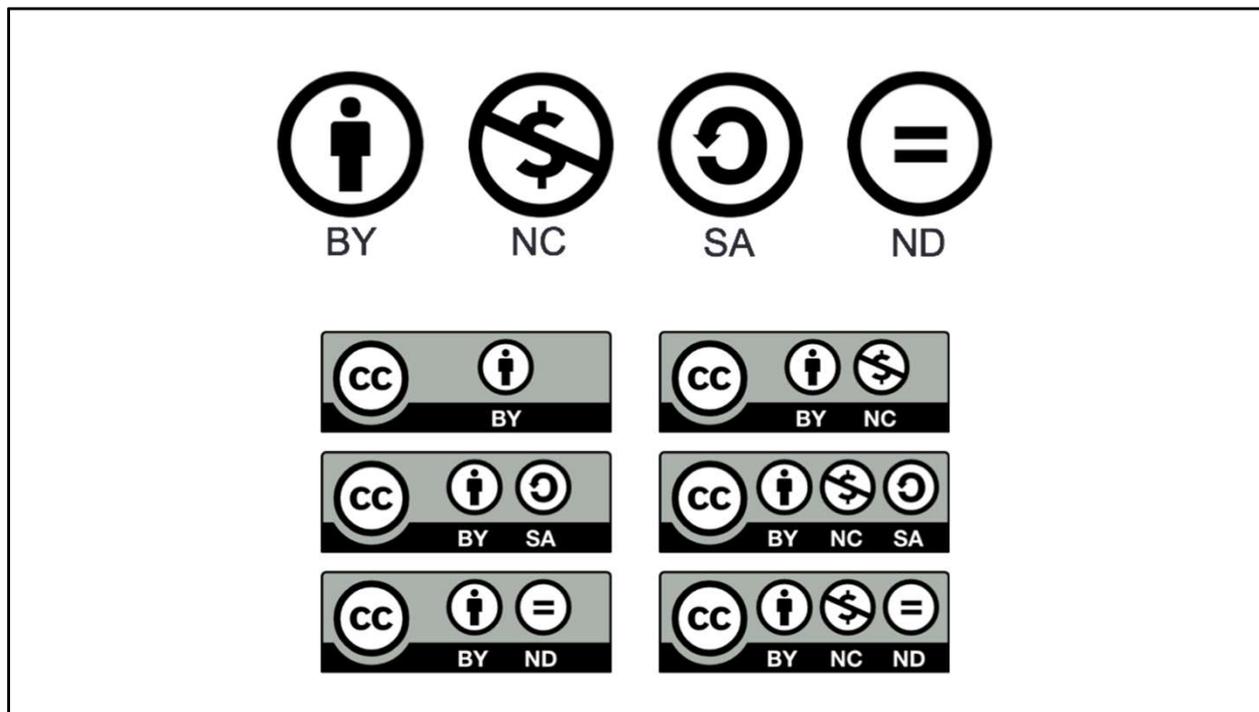
“Edit” and “mix” mean that you can alter the materials to suit the way you organize your course and what you cover. You can add, subtract, and rearrange chapters, images—anything in the material. You can make a textbook that matches the way you teach your course and the way your students learn.

You might be able to see how this ability to remix can *also* contribute to making your classroom a more equitable place. With this control over your materials, you can ensure

that the materials represent your students—that they feel like they belong in your classroom, not just because they're *not* excluded by the costs, but that they *are* included in the content.



What makes all this sharing and remixing possible is open licensing. The one most commonly used license in OER is the Creative Commons (or CC) license. You may have seen this logo or a CC license before. Many open access journals use them—so does Wikipedia!



Creative Commons licenses are made up of a combination of these four elements.

BY means “attribution” – so...credit your source

NC is “noncommercial” – it means you can use and redistribute the material as long as you don’t profit from it (you can sell it as long as you don’t profit—e.g., the campus print shop can charge for copies; they just can’t mark them up.)

SA is “share alike” – it means you can use this material to make a new thing as long as the original or any direct derivatives retain the same license. I think of this as a “pay it forward” license.

ND is “no derivatives” – it means you can use this material to make a new thing as long as you don’t revise this material. You can supplement it, but you can’t change it.

The elements can be mixed and matched to create six different licenses. The CC-BY license is the most open, and the CC-BY NC ND is sometimes considered to be the most closed. The Open Textbook Library, where you may have looked for books before this session today, doesn’t list books that don’t allow derivatives...which is great for you, because you know anything you find there can be edited and changed as you need. I know sometimes these can seem a bit complicated, but Janelle and I are always happy to answer questions about how these licenses work and interact!



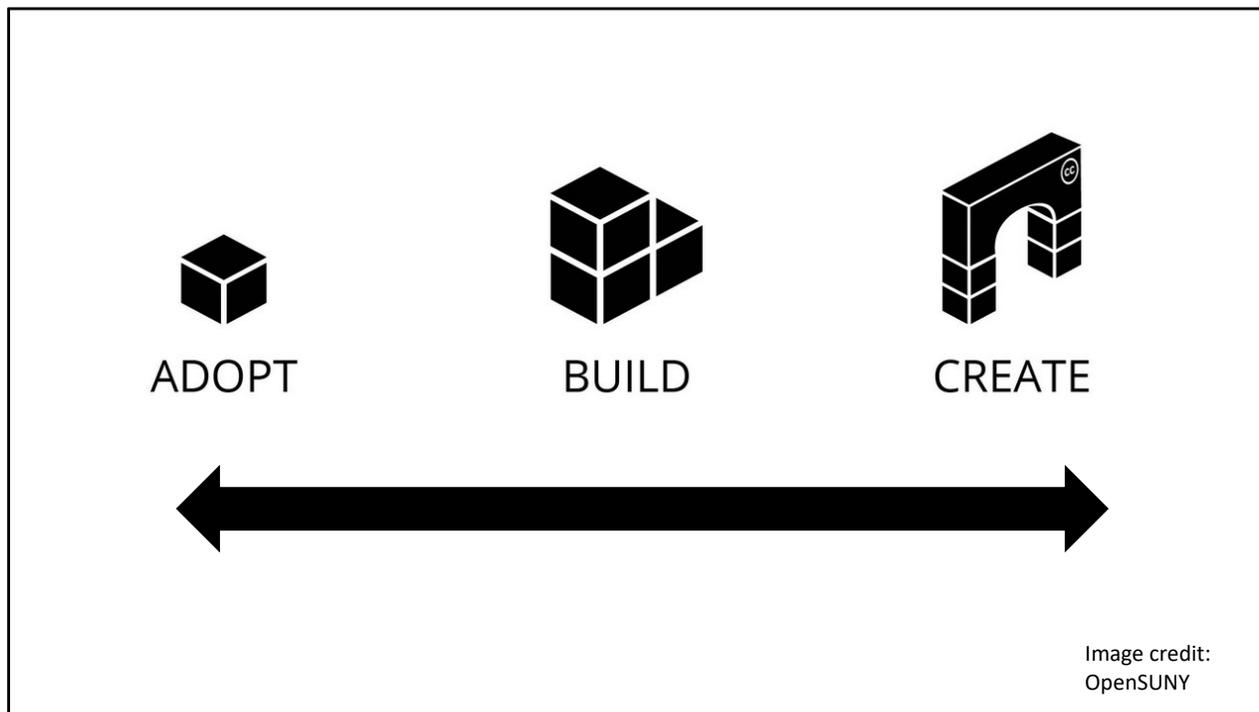
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Reserved



Some Rights  
Reserved

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I hope it's becoming clear how beneficial CC-licensed materials can be to an instructor who is a mixer-and-matcher. Maybe you have a textbook but you don't use all of it. Maybe you'd rather teach it in a different order (and not have to assign all the readings out of order!) Maybe you want to supplement it with other materials. Maybe you even created some of those other materials. If all those things had CC licenses on them, you could remix your own materials and give it to your students as a single book. They could read it online or print it. You could even have our campus print shop reproduce and bind it, as CC licenses allow duplication.



This continuum shows the range of ways professors can engage with OER. The most straightforward action is to adopt an open textbook or OER, perhaps swapping it for a commercial textbook. This is what we're emphasizing today precisely because it's the easiest way to start using OER.

A next-level action is to adapt existing OER to your needs, perhaps by editing, or remixing, or a combination. You can build an OER with existing parts.

And finally, some teachers are motivated to write an OER that suits their needs and those of their students.

Again, we're focusing on adoption (and to some extent, remixing) today. Conveniently, these are also the areas covered by the JCCTL OER grant!

Many Gettysburg professors have already adopted open textbooks or remixed them into their own new thing! So, let's take a look at some of them:

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Image source: <https://textbooks.opensuny.org/information-for-faculty/>



These are some OER that have been adopted in humanities courses here at Gettysburg – courses in Music, Spanish, and Theater. I also included an ES class in Environmental Journalism.

ES 241 Environmental Journalism - The Open Notebook

MUS 210 Musicology I: Western Music in the Medieval through Romantic Eras - Understanding Music: Past and Present

SPAN 202 Intermediate Spanish - Spanish Grammar Manual (Yepes)

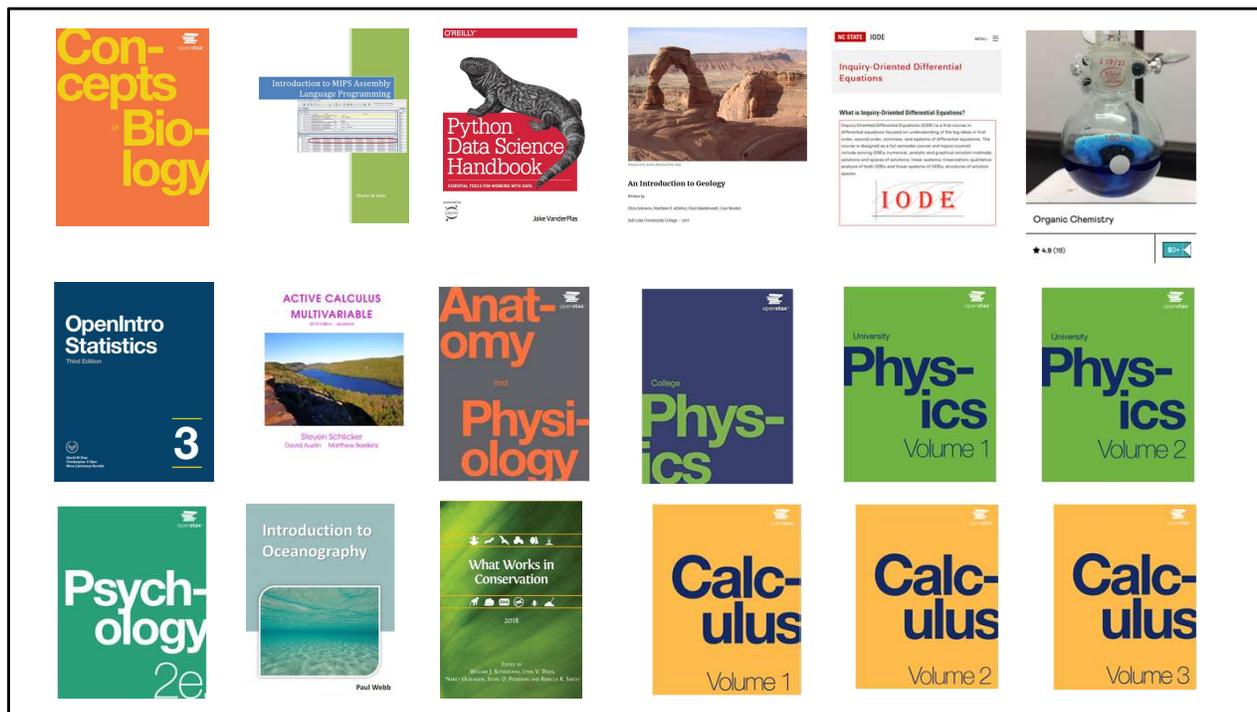
SPAN 301 Spanish Composition, Conversation, and Culture: Topics - Gramatica y composicion - Custom remix

THA 212 Fundamentals of Directing - Theatrical Words



These are Gettysburg social science courses using OER – note that the number jumped up quite a bit. These books are used in anthropology, economics, management, sociology, and WGS classes.

- ANTH 400 Capstone Experience in Anthropology - An Anthropology of Anthropology
- ECON 103 Principles of Microeconomics - OpenStax Principles of Microeconomics 2e
- REMI
- MGT 235 Statistical Methods - Introductory Business Statistics
- MGT 361 Marketing – Principles of Marketing
- MGT 365 Human Resources – Human Resource Management
- SOC 101/103 Introduction to Sociology – OpenStax Intro to Sociology 3e and Sociology: Understanding and Changing the Social World
- SOC 250 Digital Culture & Online Behavior – How the World Changed Social Media
- SOC 400 Sociology Seminar - Principles of Sociological Inquiry – Qualitative and Quantitative Methods
- WGS 120 Introduction to Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies - Introduction to WGS Studies



Finally, these are STEM classes –so many more! STEM education has traditionally relied on a big textbook to anchor the course. These are used in classes in biology, chemistry, computer science, environmental studies, health science, math, physics, and psychology. Some departments only use OER in 100-level courses for nonmajors; while others are using them much more widely throughout their curriculum.

- BIO 101 Basic Biological Concepts – OpenStax Concepts of Biology
- CHEM 203-204 Organic Chemistry - Organic Chemistry
- CS 221 Computer Organization and Assembly – Introduction to MIPS Assembly Language Programming
- CS 391 Quantitative Reasoning – Python Data Science Handbook
- ES 128 Oceanography – Intro to Oceanography
- ES 211 Principles of Ecology - Principles of Ecology - custom remix
- ES 223 Earth System Science – An Introduction to Geology
- ES 316 Conservation Biology – What Works in Conservation
- HS 209 Human Anatomy and Physiology – OpenStax Anatomy and Physiology
- HS 232 Statistics for the Health Sciences – OpenIntro Statistics
- MATH 107 Applied Statistics - OpenIntro Statistics
- MATH 111 Calculus I– OpenStax Calculus v1
- MATH 112 Calculus II - OpenStax Calculus v2

MATH 211 Multivariable Calculus - OpenStax Calculus v2, Active Calculus Multivariable  
MATH 225 Differential Equations - Inquiry-Oriented Differential Equations - Custom Remix  
PHY 103-104 Elementary Physics – OpenStax College Physics  
PHY 109-110 – Introductory Physics – OpenStax University Physics v1 and v2  
PSYCH 101 Intro to Psychology – OpenStax Psychology 2e

## Department of Mathematics

### OER

MATH 103 Mathematical Ideas  
MATH 105/106 Calculus with  
Precalculus I, II  
MATH 107 Applied Statistics  
MATH 111-112 Calculus I, II  
MATH 211 Multivariable Calculus  
MATH 225 Differential Equations  
MATH 353 Probability and  
Statistics

### Zero Cost

MATH 302 Applied Research  
MATH 321 Real Analysis  
MATH 342 Applied Linear Algebra  
MATH 361 Chaos and Dynamical  
Systems  
MATH 362 Operations Research  
MATH 381 Mathematics of  
Democracy

I want to draw attention to one department that has done an especially impressive job of using OER throughout their curriculum, both for nonmajor and major courses.

We estimate that OER adoptions saved math students over \$38,000 in the 2021-22 academic year! That doesn't count the courses, like those on the right side of the slide, that use zero-cost options like library-licensed books/articles or other non-openly-licensed but free resources.

[internal note: this is an undercalculation since creating this slide surfaced even more zero-cost courses than we knew about]

### OER

MATH 103 Mathematical Ideas (Bryant used Math in Society in past; Morton is also using it F22 ... but MATH 103 text is at discretion of instructor so this might vary)  
MATH 105/106 Calculus w Precalculus I, II- OpenStax Calculus v1 + MyOpenMath (105/106 cover same content as 111 at a slower pace)  
MATH 107 Applied Statistics - OpenIntro Statistics  
MATH 111-112 Calculus I, II- OpenStax Calculus v1/v2 + MyOpenMath  
MATH 211 Multivariable Calculus - OpenStax Calculus v2 + Active Calculus Multivariable +

## MyOpenMath

MATH 225 Differential Equations - Inquiry-Oriented Differential Equations - Custom Remix (when taught by Spayd – zero-cost when taught by Kennedy who writes his own notes and uses like a book)

MATH 353 Probability and Statistics - Introduction to Probability, Statistics and Random Processes (when taught by Spayd & Bryant – zero-cost when taught by Kennedy – commercial textbook when taught by Glass)

## Zero cost

MATH 302 Applied Research in Math – Spayd uses PR articles, no textbook

MATH 321 Real Analysis – Kennedy uses own notes as book which the department prints for students at no cost. Not sure about when Campbell Hetrick teaches it. In F22, adjunct Zimmerman is teaching with commercial textbook.

MATH 342 Applied Linear Algebra – Kennedy uses own notes as book which the department prints for students at no cost.

MATH 361 Chaos and Dynamical Systems - Kennedy uses own notes as book which the department prints for students at no cost.

MATH 362 Operations Research – Zappe uses PR articles instead of textbook

MATH 381 Selected Topics – Campbell Hetrick's The Mathematics of Democracy is using a multi-user library-licensed ebook in Fall 2022. Not sure if the whole course is zero-cost, but nothing in bookstore site 8/29/22.

MATH 212 Linear Algebra – Spayd reports that there's growing interest from Conceicao and Campbell Hetrick to use this OER <https://davidAustinm.github.io/ula/ula.html>, but they haven't yet

[also note that MATH 215 Abstract Math I uses a commercial book authored by Bajnok]



## Open Education Network

- Research universities
- Community colleges
- 4-year colleges and universities
- State-wide systems
- Consortia
- Tribal colleges
- HBCUs
- Hispanic-serving institutions
- Australian
- Canadian

Hopefully by now you're intrigued and want to know more about what OER might be a good fit for your courses and where to find them.

I want to take a minute to talk about the Open Education Network (or OEN). The OEN is a diverse network of higher education institutions working together to make higher education more affordable, equitable, and accessible. It has over eleven hundred member campuses, and represents a wide variety of institution types in North America and Australia, displayed here. This number includes Gettysburg College—we're an Allied member of the OEN through our membership in Affordable Learning Pennsylvania. The OEN is NOT a vendor, but it does have a great free tool for finding and assessing open textbooks.

## Finding OER



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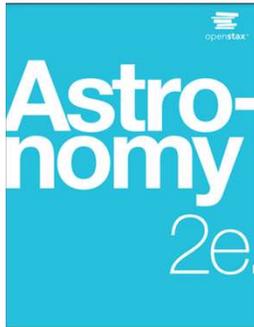


[open.umn.edu/opentextbooks](https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks)

That tool, and the best example of the OEN's effort to support the common good, is the Open Textbook Library (OTL) ([open.umn.edu/opentextbooks](https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks)), a comprehensive library of open textbooks, reviewed by faculty, that make open textbooks freely available to anyone, anywhere, and at any time.

This is the tool we recommended you use when you registered for this session. And if you are looking to swap a commercial textbook for an open textbook, this is always the first place I recommend to look for a title. It also includes reviews written by professors...including over two dozen Gettysburg professors who have written reviews in the past!

## Search results for "astronomy"



### Astronomy 2e - 2e

Copyright Year: 2022

Contributors: Fraknoi, Morrison, and Wolff

Publisher: OpenStax CNX

License: CC BY

Designed to meet the scope and sequence of your course, Astronomy 2e is written in clear non-technical language, with the occasional touch of humor and a wide range of clarifying illustrations. It has many analogies drawn from everyday life to help non-science majors appreciate, on their own terms, what our modern exploration of the universe is revealing. The book can be used for either a one-semester or two-semester introductory course.



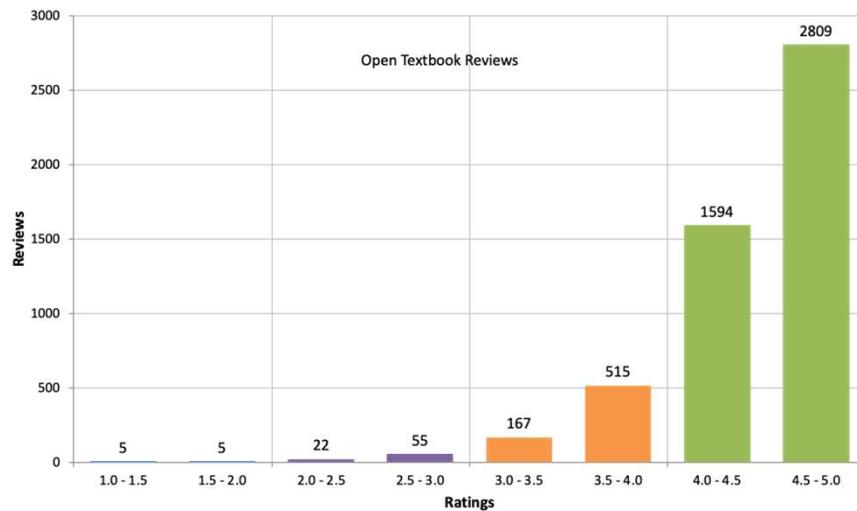
(20 reviews)

[READ MORE »](#)

As an example of what the OTL looks like: if I look for astronomy books, on the search results page, I can quickly see titles, authors, and brief descriptions, as well as the rating, which looks to be about 4.5 stars averaged over 20 reviews. Also note that this is the second edition of this title, so yes, open textbooks are maintained and updated.

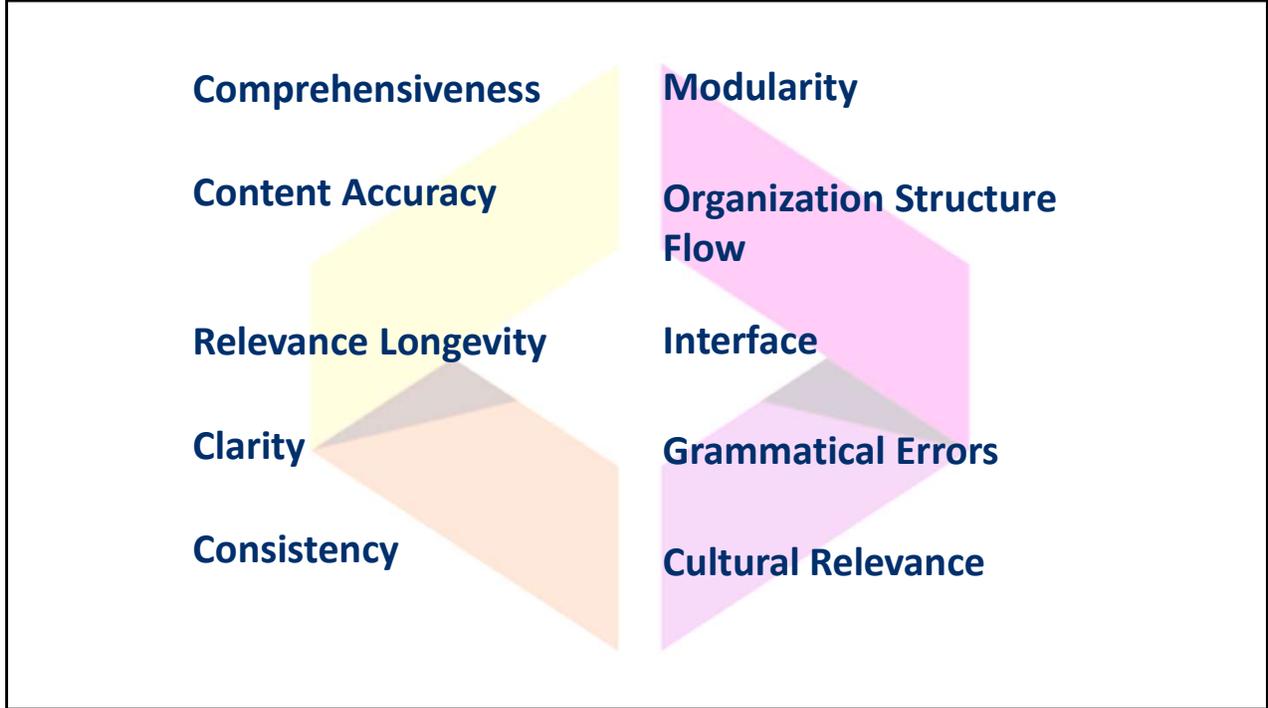
When I click through, I can see a table of contents, author information, links to the book, as well as the full content of those reviews.

## Are they any good?



So...about those reviews: are the books in the Open Textbook Library any good? The distribution of reviews collected in the OTL looks like this.

The OEN focuses on HONEST reviews, not seeking “good” reviews. Even if a text doesn’t live up to expectations, an honest review will tell instructors (and textbook authors and remixers) where things can be improved.



The reviews all follow a rubric with these 10 criteria. These reviews are not the scholarly narratives you might find in peer-reviewed journals. They are fairly utilitarian and designed to be easy to write and use.



Of course, there are other places you can find open textbooks or Open Educational Resources (which, as a category, includes things that are smaller than a single textbook that supports an entire course). Here are a few.

If you'd like to focus your time on evaluating potential course materials rather than hunting for them, outsource the search to a friendly librarian. Only you can decide if a source will support your course learning goals, but we can jump start that process by sending you a short list of titles to look at. We also might know about sources that are brand new, not well indexed on the web, or things that are in development.

With that, I'm going to hand it off to Janelle to tell you a little bit more about how the book review and incentive process works!

## What can I do?

- Take a look – consider an open textbook
- Write a review
- Adopt if a book meets the needs of you and your students
- Raise awareness – talk with colleagues in your program and department

If you are interested in exploring, here are actions you can take right now!

- Take a look at the OTL and consider an open textbook that could replace a commercial textbook you use.
- Write a review of that textbook. This gives you a chance to dig in to a new text, which should inform an adoption decision
- Adopt the book if it works for your learning goals and your students' needs
- Whether or not you write a review or adopt an OER, you can help raise awareness by talking with colleagues

## Writing a review

Is there a textbook in the Open Textbook Library that fits your class and/or expertise?

\$200 incentive will be paid for:

1. Attending today's workshop, AND
2. Reviewing a textbook in the Open Textbook Library

So.... About that incentive that may have caught your eye. If you are here today, and you teach a credit-bearing course at Gettysburg College, you are eligible for the book review stipend.

## How it works

1. You will receive an email with a link to the online review form. *The email will come from [opentextbooks@umn.edu](mailto:opentextbooks@umn.edu)!*
2. Complete a concise review by November 8, 2022.
3. The review will be posted on the Open Textbook Library site under an open license.
4. Incentive will be paid.

Here's how it works:

You will receive an email from [opentextbooks@umn.edu](mailto:opentextbooks@umn.edu)– not me! – so look out for that and try not to assume it's spam. (If you reply to that email, though, I will get it.) I will provide the names and emails of everyone here today to OEN so they can coordinate the review process. They will send instructions and reminders. After the due date passes, they will let me know who completed the review so I can put the wheels in motion to pay the incentive.

The due date is 6 weeks out: November 8 (Election Day).

# Thank you!

Questions? Email [OER@gettysburg.edu](mailto:OER@gettysburg.edu)

Slides and speaker notes:

<https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/librarypubs/163>



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