



---

## Remote Teaching Updates & Resources

1 message

---

**Betsy Barre** <barreea@wfu.edu>  
Reply-To: Betsy Barre <barreea@wfu.edu>  
To:

Mon, Apr 27, 2020 at 8:01 AM



# OER for Access, Equity, & Agency

*By Kyle Denlinger on Apr 26, 2020 11:56 pm*



Think back for a moment and recall some of the many teaching challenges you faced this semester. Even when it felt like so much control had been taken from us, it was inspiring to see the courage and ingenuity of our faculty in the face of adversity. None of us could control the circumstances, but there were certain things we could control: our syllabi, our learning objectives, the design of our assessments and student interactions, our approach to demonstrating care for students in crisis. One thing that many of us couldn't control, however, was whether our students had reliable access to the required course materials we had assigned them.

## **Barriers to Access**

One of our faculty colleagues reports on the [Facebook Group](#) that a student of

theirs has been making regular 2.5 hour round-trips in order to access reliable Wi-Fi. Numerous students overseas have had difficulty accessing the library's subscription resources because the campus VPN is blocked in their home country. Many of our students lost access to their print texts and had to make do with low-quality scans from friends or instructors, or, if they were lucky, an electronic edition that a publisher temporarily made available for free. With the library's print collection locked away for the semester, our much-used Course Reserves service could no longer fully serve its important role in filling that access gap. As we contemplate the possibility of a remote fall semester and move forward in a time of tremendous economic uncertainty, it is also imperative that we take more seriously the issue of cost as an access barrier. ([It has, of course, always been.](#))

Each barrier to access our students face is a significant barrier to learning, equity, and agency. Students shouldn't have to decide whether they can afford to learn in the classes they signed up for. We shouldn't have to perform a pedagogical contortionist act each time a student hits a technological access barrier, fighting for ways to circumvent systems in order to put expensive proprietary content into their hands. The limitations of the walled-garden online homework systems that come bundled with textbooks shouldn't dictate how we approach a subject. We should take full control over our teaching and our content and eliminate these barriers to learning, equity, and innovative teaching.

## Taking Control

I want you to have this control not only so that your students can learn even in the midst of disruption, but so that you are more free to teach in the ways you want to teach, regardless of whether your students are all in the same room or are scattered around the world. If you use a textbook, I want your students to have immediate and perpetual access to that text on the device of their choice. I want cost not to be a factor, as we know these costs disproportionately affect our most disadvantaged students. I want you to feel the relief of your most vulnerable students when you tell them that they don't need to buy,

borrow, rent, pirate, or copy their books, because they're available right now, online, for free. I want you to plan an ambitious first week of lessons confident in the knowledge that your students will have access on day one.

I want you to have control over how your textbook addresses your specific learning objectives. If you want to add a chapter or examples that reflect your local context, or to combine elements from multiple different texts into a custom edition, I want you to do so without worrying about the copyright police. I want your students to write *their own* chapters of the textbook, and I want you to take this new class-authored text and upload it freely, without restriction, to your course sites. I want you to be able to share that text with others in your department and with your peers around the world. I want your students to hold a print copy in their hands, proud in knowing that their labor has added real value to the world, that it will serve to benefit future students in your course and perhaps even those at other institutions.

I want you to have control over your lecture slides, exam questions, and other ancillary materials. I want you to have your choice of online homework systems, including free and low-cost options, not just the expensive option bundled with your textbook. I want you to choose *not* to use an online homework system if that's not your style, but if you do, I want you to choose the system that takes your students' privacy seriously and doesn't monetize their personal data.

I want your teaching to be limited only by your imagination, not your course materials. I want you to have what you all signed up for in the first place: academic freedom.

I think you might want these things, too. **Open Educational Resources** can help you get there.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching and learning materials that are built upon the principles of Openness: not only are they free to access, they also come bundled with [a set of permissions](#) that allow you to retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute the content however you like, with few or no restrictions. They're not just "free as in beer," as the expression goes; OER are free as in *freedom*.

I'm not here to tell you that your choice of textbook is wrong, or that you even need to use a textbook in the first place. If you have a textbook that works for you and your students, that's great. Keep using it. But if you've ever felt that you're fighting to overcome access barriers or that you would benefit from more control over your content, consider OER. Here are some places to start.

## OpenStax | <https://openstax.org/>

OpenStax, a non-profit publisher of open textbooks based out of Rice University, [has saved 9 million students over \\$830 million since 2012](#). Currently, they say, [1.5 million students](#) at 4-year institutions are using an OpenStax textbook. Like many OER, OpenStax textbooks undergo the same kind of rigorous peer review and editorial processes as traditional textbooks. They even come with optional (and free!) ancillary materials like slide decks, syllabus language, solutions manuals, and content modules you can upload directly to Canvas. All of these are free for you to modify and build upon. Their textbooks are free to download. Inexpensive print copies are also available, complete with hard covers and color glossy graphics. Many texts are now in their second edition. Check out [Chemistry 2e](#), [Psychology 2e](#), and [Principles of Microeconomics 2e](#), or browse through [their extensive list of texts in other disciplines](#). What's more, OpenStax is developing [their own affordable courseware platform](#) for select texts, and they also provide [a list of partners](#) that provide compatible tools and courseware platforms at very affordable rates.

## Open Textbook Library | [https://open.umn.edu/ opentextbooks/](https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/)

While not a publisher themselves, the Open Textbook Network's [Open Textbook Library](#) is a growing catalog of more than 700 open textbooks from various institutions and open textbook publishers, such as [BCcampus](#), [Open](#)

[Oregon](#), [Open SUNY](#), [Rebus Community](#), and the aforementioned OpenStax. Faculty at Open Textbook Network member institutions participate in openly reviewing textbook offerings there on [a rigorous ten-facet rubric](#), making it abundantly clear if a specific textbook is worth your time. Check out [Communication in the Real World: An Introduction to Communication Studies](#) and [Sustainability: A Comprehensive Foundation](#) for examples of thorough reviews. Also take a look at some [texts that are currently in development](#).

**OASIS** | <https://oasis.geneseo.edu/>

and

**MOM** | <https://mom.gmu.edu/>

OER exist all around the Web in tiny pockets and in vast repositories, so finding OER used to mean knowing where to look (and to some extent it still does).

[OASIS](#), from SUNY Geneseo, and the [Mason OER Metafinder](#) (or MOM) from George Mason University, are two search tools that take different approaches to addressing the OER discoverability problem. Both provide easy-to-use search functionality for finding OER beyond textbooks. On both you'll find tutorials, videos, interactive learning objects, and even entire courses.

Their different approaches are interesting only to OER nerds, but know this: OASIS searches a smaller, more controlled pile of content, so some relevant stuff might be missed. MOM searches a bigger, wilder pile of content, so you'll probably need to customize your search to eliminate noise. I suggest you try both and see which approach you prefer.

## Your Friends at ZSR

We in the library are particularly enthusiastic about eliminating access barriers and helping our faculty colleagues discover and adopt OER. If you're ready to explore some alternatives, [book a chat with me](#) or get in touch with [your library liaison](#). At best, you stand to discover a great OER that can eliminate barriers

for your students and enable you to do the kinds of teaching you never really could do with commercial texts. At worst, you'll spend 30 minutes talking about teaching with a librarian, which, honestly, isn't such a bad way to spend half an hour.

If you already use an OER in your course, *please* reach out to me! I want to know who out there is using OER. I'd enjoy a chance to talk about ways we can partner in the future.

If there's not a great OER out there for your class, or if you're not the kind that uses a textbook, that's OK. I'd still like to talk. Have you ever considered having your students create reusable OER content that lives on as part of your course? This nascent idea, called [Open Pedagogy](#), is one of the teaching practices that most excites me. If this interests you, take a listen to [this episode of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast](#), read about some examples in the [Open Pedagogy Notebook](#), or peruse [A Guide to Making Open Textbooks with Students](#) for some inspiration.

As we look forward to some kind of normal, let us carry with us the lessons we learned this spring. Any barrier that stands between students and learning is one we should take down, if we can. With OER, we have that power. Let's use it.

The post [OER for Access, Equity, & Agency](#) appeared first on [Center for the Advancement of Teaching](#).

[Read in browser »](#)

## Recent Articles:

[How Do I Care for My Students and Myself During This Difficult Time?](#)

[How Do I Boost Participation in My Remote Course?](#)

[Preparing Summer Course Materials](#)

[Three Strategies for Teaching Writing Remotely During the Pandemic](#)  
[Assessing Student Learning: Alternatives to Closed-Book Exams](#)

---

This email was sent to [zanisht@wfu.edu](mailto:zanisht@wfu.edu)

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

Wake Forest University · [1834 Wake Forest Rd](#) · Zsr Library 6th Floor · Winston Salem, NC 27109-6000 · USA

