OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
Publishing Program

OER IN ART HISTORY: BENEFITS, CHALLENGES, AND HERE'S HOPING...

By Dr. Karla McManus

Open educational resources (OER) are revolutionizing the teaching of art history and the humanities, even if not everyone has realized it yet. As an emerging scholar in the field, I began my MA in art history in 2007 and finished my PhD in 2014, I have been adopting techniques from the digital humanities over in the last fifteen years and have witnessed the transformation of research and teaching methods through the development of new tools for accessing, organizing, presenting, and interpreting data and information. OER is one of these tools. As research funding sources push us to make our publications more accessible or open-access, and as museums and galleries use digital technologies to open their collections to the public, it is necessary for instructors to reconsider the way they teach and how OER can benefit our students.

THERE ARE THREE WAYS THAT I USE OER:

1. As assigned course readings – to teach traditional disciplinary skills of reading and history writing
2. As "asynchronous" supporting content that allows me to present alterative voices in alternative formats such as videos or virtual tours (exhibition reviews, critiques, artist statements, interviews)
3. As images in lectures – to teach accurate and ethical sourcing of images in the Web 2.0 academic world of images

University of Regina

University of Michigan Museum of Art, "Wish You Were Here: African Art and Restitution," UMMA: University of Michigan Museum of Art, August 2021.

I am currently deep in development of Introduction to Art History for the University of Regina and open educational resources have been central to the redesign. This is a 13-week week course that teaches the whole history of art across time and around the world. A big task! My mandate for this course is to be global in geographical scope, accessible to as many students as possible, and to support the path towards decolonization of art history through an emphasis of the problematic history of the discipline.

1. **What OER offers is a flexible approach to student learning that allows me to eschew the traditional text book and the hierarchy of structure to involves.** Before I sound like a complete radical, please note: I personally love textbooks! The amount of work and care that goes into developing a book is a wonderful thing and their longevity as a source of knowledge cannot be ignored. But, for me, the benefits of using OER much outweigh the value of a textbook at the introductory level. One of the main benefits is the ability to structure readings around current issues and concerns in the discipline by selecting sections of online readings and employing them strategically. For example, I can use Smarthistory.org's essay on the Elgin Marbles as a case study alongside the unit on Global Ancient Art (which includes the art of the Olmecs, the Shang Dynasty, and Ancient Andean art) to get students thinking about how art ends up in institutions, who defines what is important in the history of art, and how nationalism and colonialism have shaped the value we place on these art objects.
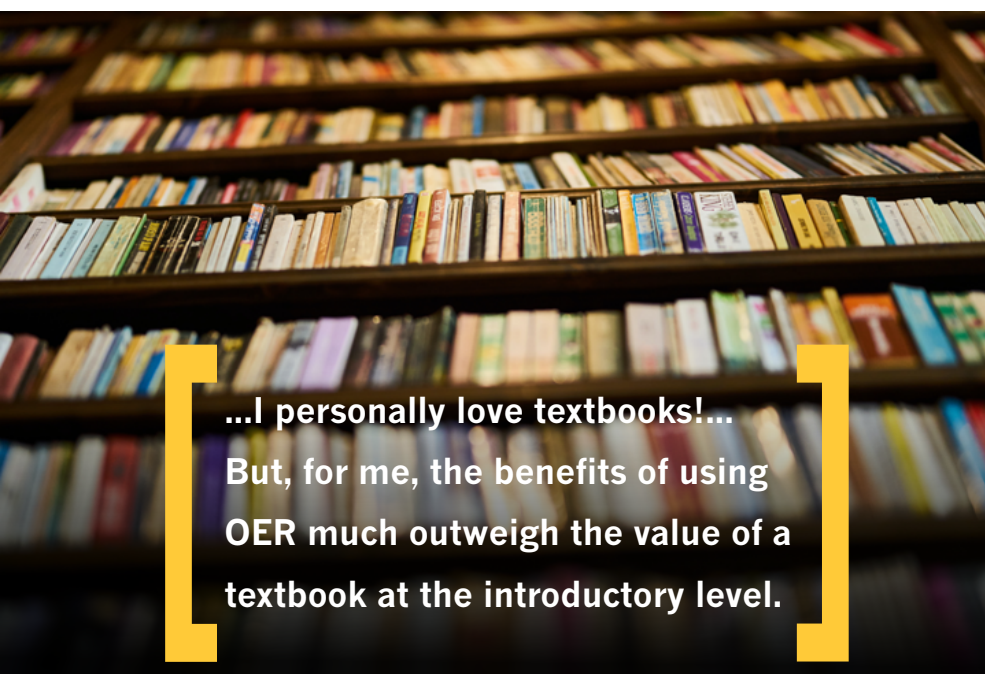
...I personally love textbooks!...
But, for me, the benefits of using OER much outweigh the value of a textbook at the introductory level.
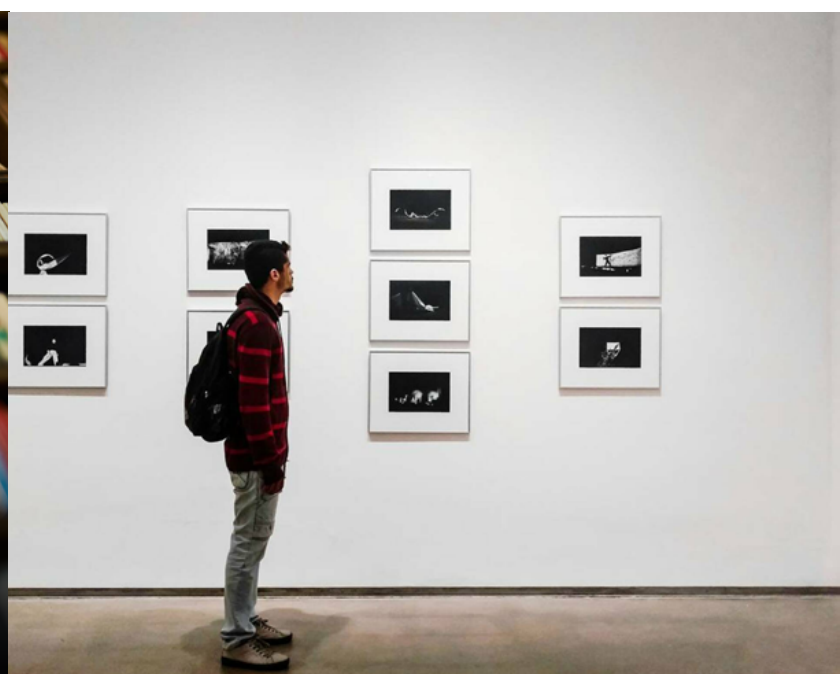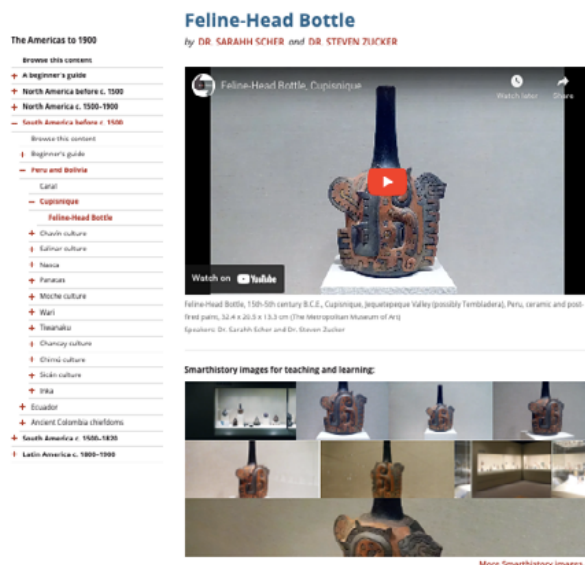
Dr. Sarahh Scher and Dr. Steven Zucker, "Feline-Head Bottle," in Smarthistory, September 25, 2016, accessed November 15, 2022.

Rock Art in Africa Map. "TARA: Trust for African Rock Art," accessed February 28, 2022.

2. **Supporting content can be very valuable to students who are experiencing art for the first time.** It is one thing to give a compelling lecture with images on a screen and another to have them visit art in person. While I send my students to places in Regina such as the MacKenzie Art Gallery, there is little chance we will be visiting the majority of the art we discuss, such as the Grotte Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc caves in south-eastern France. But, thanks to the **French Ministry of Culture** they can virtual tour it.

3. **While the history of photography only plays a small part in the content of this course, I am very conscious of the role of images in the narrative of art history and in the practical design of the course.** One of the first activities students do for this course is to learn how to cite an image. I model this citation method in all my slides and speak frequently about where I source my images and why this is important to properly attribute an art object. It is also, in our digital world, essential to understand that just like information on the web is not all reliable, not every image can be understood as accurate. OER is great boon to art historians today as art institutions have started to understand the value of digitizing their collections and making those images available for free. Compared to the not-so-long-ago days when scholars had to use slides made from photographs of artworks pictured in books, the high-resolution reproductions provided by the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art are making the study of art history that much more accessible, if not exactly geographically diverse.

As my examples above demonstrate, we still have a lot of work to do to achieve equity, diversity, and inclusion in the study of art history across time and space. While OER offers a lot of great tools to problematize the history of art history, it is still the institutions in the global north who hold most of the resources, quite literally in the form of art works – I'm looking at you British Museum – but also financial and digital resources. More support for the digitization and dissemination of images, the translation of art history writing into diverse languages for multiple audiences, and the continued effort to make the work of curators and interpreters available virtually will make the global project of art history stronger. I predict that OER will continue play an important role in that transformation.

> **OER is great boon to art historians today as art institutions have started to understand the value of digitizing their collections...**

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE BOOK BUILDING FOR CLASSES TODAY, AND TOMORROW

By Arlysse Quiring

The proposition to build an Open Educational Resource can be an intimidating prospect, but with a few basic skills and tools on hand any project can become a manageable accomplishment. For the purposes of this article we will focus primarily on the program Pressbooks, though there are a number of other platforms available to create OER like Libretexts, or H5P.org which is an even more general OER conceptual platform beyond textbooks.

Pressbooks is a versatile program for creating an open textbook, but is also useful for any publication you wish to modify regularly, and share with a wider audience without continually sending new links or updated documents. The use of Pressbooks feels somewhat similar to Microsoft Word, but more user-friendly. Learning to navigate the menu to the physical left of the book editor will provide you with everything from pre-set (but still modifiable) book layouts, to multimedia plug-ins and direct content editing. It is capable of book cloning within other Pressbooks publications (literally duplicating the book for modification/adaptation), and is a very flexible program for including H5P tools, YouTube videos, and other multimedia that function with plugins already included in the program.
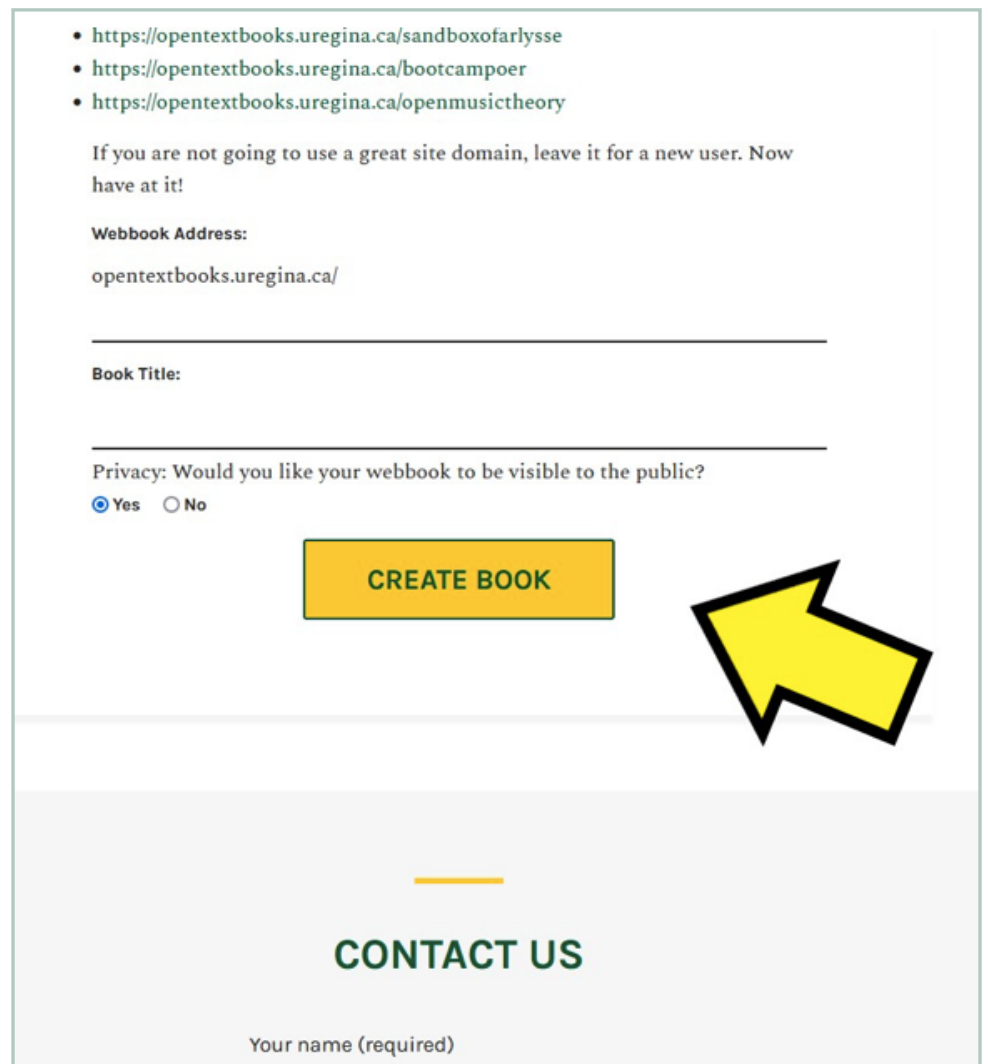
Pressbooks (and other open textbook platforms) differs significantly from traditional online textbooks in a number of ways. To begin with, the copyright options include a selection of open access copyright agreements that benefit content sharing and cloning in a variety of capacities, from direct cloning and adaptation to content-share-only (particularly important to review if attempting to clone a book). A Pressbooks text also does not need to be static, updated only annually or every few years. If you want to update it daily, you can update it daily. For all intents and purposes, an online OER textbook is a website dedicated solely to that book's content. A pdf download is possible, but otherwise it is accessible to anyone with internet access, and the link to the site (either made public or link-only).

The accessibility options for Pressbooks and other OER platforms are unprecedented in academic information sharing. Regardless of the range of accommodations a student may require, the options in an online open textbook are endless. From digital text enlargement, screen colour change, pre-recorded videos with subtitles, in-textbook activities with checkable answers, the proverbial digital sky is the limit for reader accessibility. Keeping in mind internet access or the lack of reliable internet services as a key component to accessibility services, it is still possible to download pdf and ePub copies of Pressbooks publications to be sent to students (email, flashdrive, etc.) At that juncture the student will still have access to everything but external internet links like for YouTube. It's also advisable when editing a book to review the mobile version of the publication, as students are increasingly turning to phones and tablets as primary technology for their studies. In regards to actually building a book on Pressbooks, the program is user friendly but like any program will still need a bit of time for the user to become accustomed to the different features. Akin to word, a new book can be started in some fairly easy steps. We would begin simply with the function "Create A New Book", which will include the title of the book (which can be changed later), and the intended URL (which cannot be modified after the initial creation).

Pressbooks then creates a preset platform, where we can adapt the appearance in a multitude of themes, styles, and cover options. It's recommended to keep an external document with the content of the book, but at this juncture we can copy and paste any and all content into chapters, subject sections, and however else one wishes to organize the content of the book. We will keep in mind the "Front Matter" (the who, what when and where of the book's creation as see in a traditional book), and the "Back Matter" (an appendix, further reading, etc.) Editing can be continual, but when creating a book for a specific class it's always best practice to include significant scheduled time for editing and troubleshooting items, like verifying external links and interactive content. We can publish at any time, either setting the book to link-only or accessible to anyone through internet and directory search.
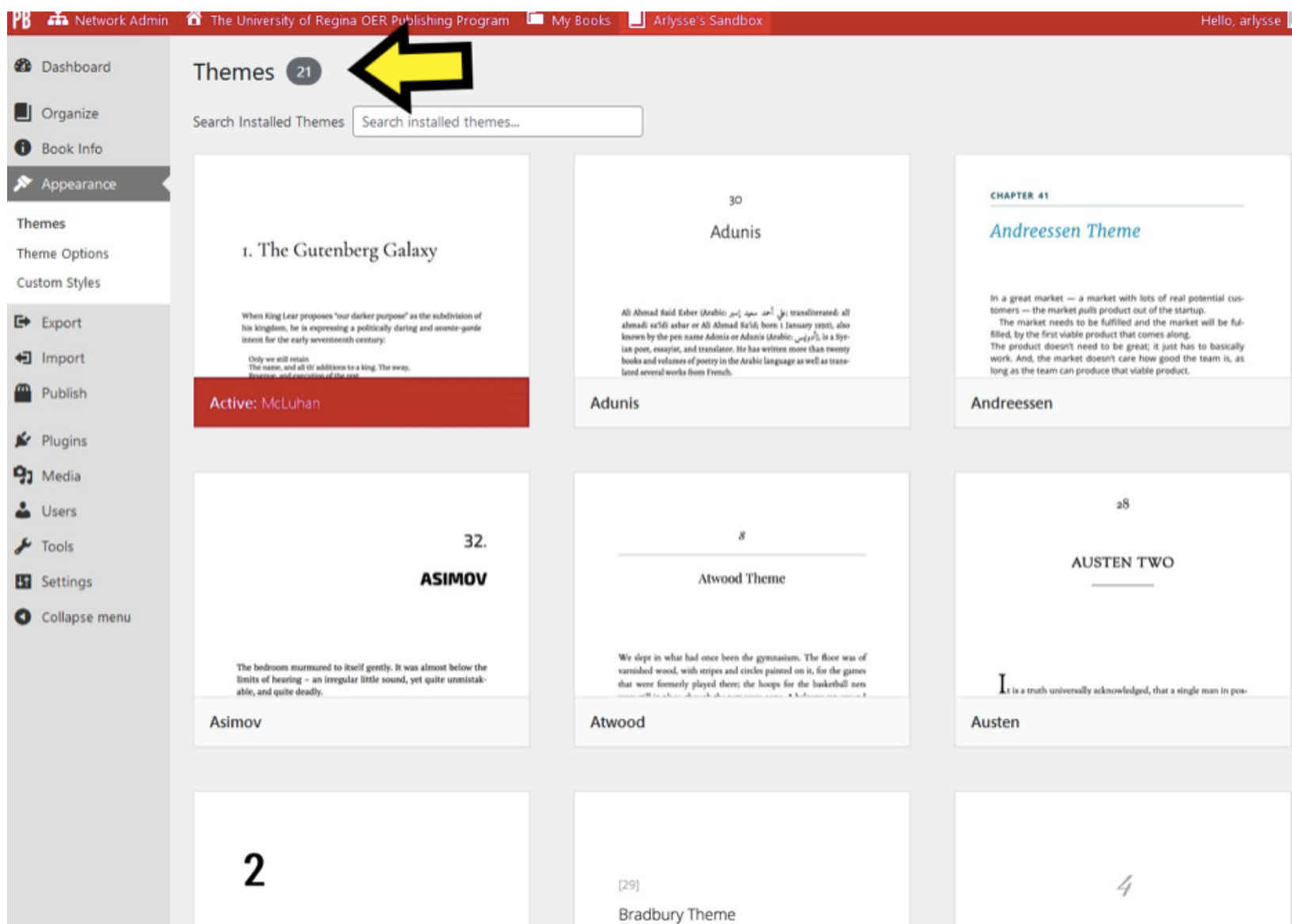
Building a book on Pressbooks or any other platform is a learning process. We develop skills as we go, but it can be intimidating to begin, and at times frustrating to adapt to a new platform. The University of Regina Library has a number of toolkits, tips and tricks ready for users amongst our OER library guides (general link below). Additionally, our team of librarians with expertise in OER (Cara Bradley, Brad Doerksen) and copyright (Christina Winter) are here to help guide you with general OER content, and Isaac Mulolani and myself (Arlysse Quiring) are pleased to assist you with any book building and Pressbooks questions you may have on your OER journey.

Resources:

Archer Library Guides

Pressbooks User Guide

U of R OER Directory

Pressbooks Directory

OPEN PEDAGOGY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
by Rajiv Jhangiani and Robin DeRosa

The **United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights** asserts that "higher education shall be equally accessible to all." Yet, even in North America in 2017, "the likelihood of earning a college degree is tied to family income" (**Goldrick-Rab**). For those of us who work in Higher Ed, it's likely that we have been casually aware of the link between family income and college enrolment, attendance, persistence, and completion. But for those of us who teach, it's likely that the pedagogies and processes that inflect our daily work are several steps removed from the economic challenges that our students face. Even though **67% of college students in Florida and 54% of those in British Columbia** cannot afford to purchase at least one of their required course textbooks, we more readily attribute their inability to complete assigned readings to laziness and entitlement than to unaffordability. This is precisely why the push to reduce the high cost of textbooks that has been the cornerstone of the Open Educational Resources (OER) movement has been a wake-up call for many of us who may not always have understood what we could do to directly impact the affordability of a college degree.

When faculty use OER, we aren't just saving a student money on textbooks: **we are directly impacting that student's ability to enroll in, persist through, and successfully complete a course**. In other words, we are directly impacting that student's ability to attend, succeed in, and graduate from college. When we talk about OER, we bring two things into focus: that access is critically important to conversations about academic success, and that faculty and other instructional staff can play a critical role in the process of making learning accessible.

If a central gift that OER brings to students is that it makes college more affordable, one of the central gifts that it brings to faculty is that of agency, and how this can help us rethink our pedagogies in ways that center on access. If we do this, we might start asking broader questions that go beyond "How can I lower the cost of textbooks in this course?" If we think of ourselves as responsible for making sure that everyone can come to our course table to learn, we will find ourselves concerned with the many other expenses that students face in paying for college. How will they get to class if they can't afford gas money or a bus pass? How will they afford childcare on top of tuition fees? How will they focus on their homework if they haven't had a square meal in two days or if they don't know where they will be sleeping that night? How will their families pay rent if they cut back their work hours in order to attend classes? How much more student loan debt will they take on for each additional semester it takes to complete all of their required classes? How will they obtain the credit card they need to purchase an access

> **...67% of college students in Florida and 54% of those in British Columbia cannot afford to purchase at least one of their required course textbooks...**

code? How will they regularly access their free open textbook if they don't own an expensive laptop or tablet?

And what other access issues do students face as they face these economic challenges? Will they be able to read their Chemistry textbook given their vision impairment? Will their LMS site list them by their birth name rather than their chosen name, and thereby misgender them? Will they have access to the knowledge they need for research if their college restricts their search access or if they don't have Wi-Fi or a computer at home? Are they safe to participate in online, public collaborations if they are undocumented? Is their college or the required adaptive learning platform collecting data on them, and if so, could those data be used in ways that could put them at risk?

OER invite faculty to play a direct role in making higher education more accessible. And they invite faculty to ask questions about how we can impact access in ways that go beyond textbook costs. At the very least, they help us see the challenges that students face in accessing higher education as broad, as severe, and as directly related to their academic success, or lack thereof.

> **This is, fundamentally, about the dream of a public learning commons, where learners are empowered to shape the world as they encounter it.**

So one key component of Open Pedagogy might be that it sees access, broadly writ, as fundamental to learning and to teaching, and agency as an important way of broadening that access. OER are licensed with open licenses, which reflects not just a commitment to access in terms of the cost of knowledge, but also access in terms of the creation of knowledge. Embedded in the social justice commitment to making college affordable for all students is a related belief that knowledge should not be an elite domain. Knowledge consumption and knowledge creation are not separate but parallel processes, as knowledge is co-constructed, contextualized, cumulative, iterative, and recursive. Just as the open license allows for the remixing and revision of OER, it also opens the gate into a particular way of thinking about learning. It's an update of **Freire**, as we move from a banking-model– conceptualized as the download of information into the student brain– to a participatory model, conceptualized as an interaction between a learner and their learning materials. To use **John Gardner's metaphor**: a move from providing cut flowers to growing plants. A move exhibited by shift in instructional mindset from "how do I cover all of the canonical content?" or even "how do I map my lectures onto the textbook's table of contents?" through "how do I create or modify instructional resources to serve my pedagogical goals?" to "how do I work with my students to co-create not just resources but an environment purposively built for authentic learning?"

In this way, Open Pedagogy invites us to focus on how we can increase access to higher education and how we can increase access to knowledge– both its reception and its creation. This is, fundamentally, about the dream of a public learning commons, where learners are empowered to shape the world as they encounter it. With the open license at the heart of our work, we care both about "free" and about "freedom," about resources and practices, about access and about accessibility, about content and about contribution. This is not a **magical thinking** approach to digital pedagogy. It's an honest appraisal of the barriers that exist in our educational systems and a refusal to abdicate responsibility for those barriers. We will work together to critically examine the challenges and violence that constrict learning; work to open collaborative, inquisitive, inclusive pathways to learning for our students, our communities, and our world. We invite you to join us.

OER EVALUATION CRITERIA
by Affordable Learning Georgia

The following is a checklist for the evaluation of OER from Affordable Learning Georgia. A more detailed set of criteria can be downloaded from **ALG Quality Standards OER**.

☑ **CLARITY, COMPREHENSIBILITY, AND READABILITY**

- Is the content, including any instructions, exercises, or supplemental material, clear and comprehensible to students?
- Is the content well-categorized in terms of logic, sequencing, and flow?
- Is the content consistent with its language and key terms?

☑ **CONTENT ACCURACY AND TECHNICAL ACCURACY**

- Is the content accurate based on both your expert knowledge and through external sources?
- Are there any factual, grammatical, or typographical errors?
- Is the interface easy to navigate? Are there broken links or obsolete formats?

☑ **ADAPTABILITY AND MODULARITY**

- Is the resource in a file format which allows for adaptations, modifications, rearrangements, and updates?
- Is the resource easily divided into modules, or sections, which can then be used or rearranged out of their original order?
- Is the content licensed in a way which allows for adaptations and modifications?

☑ **APPROPRIATENESS**

- Is the content presented at a reading level appropriate for higher education students?
- How is the content useful for instructors or students?
- Is the content itself appropriate for higher education?

☑ **ACCESSIBILITY**

- Is the content accessible to students with disabilities through the compatibility of third-party reading applications?
- If you are using Web resources, does each image have alternate text that can be read?
- Do videos have accurate closed-captioning?
- Are students able to access the materials in a quick, non-restrictive manner?

☑ **SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES**

- Does the OER contain any supplementary materials, such as homework resources, study guides, tutorials, or assessments?
- Have you reviewed these supplementary resources in the same manner as the original OER?

CALL FOR PROPOSALS TO DEVELOP OER

The University of Regina Open Educational Resources (OER) Publishing Program is pleased to announce a call for proposals to develop open educational resources. By supporting open educational resource development and use, the Program aims to improve the teaching experience for faculty and instructors and increase accessibility and affordability of education for students.

The deadline for submissions is Friday, 13 January (11:59 pm SK time).

THERE ARE THREE SEPARATE GRANTS BEING OFFERED AS PART OF THIS CALL:

OER SMALL PROJECT GRANT: ADAPTATION

This grant assists interested faculty and instructors with undertaking small-scale adaptation projects and thus helps them to get started using existing OERs.
- Minor adaptation of an existing open textbook resource (addition/change of up to 25% of existing content)
- Open pedagogy projects with students working as co-creators of content
- Approximate timeline for project completion: 4-6 months
- Funding available: up to $3,500 per application
- Download the application form: **Small Project Grant: Adaptation application**

OER SMALL PROJECT GRANT: SUPPLEMENTARY TEACHING RESOURCES

This grant option is for faculty and instructors to undertake the creation of supplementary materials for use in courses.
- Supplementary teaching resources for courses such as testbanks, presentation slides, videos, audios, images, H5P, animations, case studies
- Approximate timeline for project completion: 4-6 months
- Funding available: up to $3,500 per application
- Download the application form: **Small Project Grant: Supplementary application**

OER LARGE PROJECT GRANT

This grant is meant to support faculty and instructors to undertake large OER projects. This type of project requires larger budgets and commitments from participants in terms of time and resources (e.g., research assistance, instructional design, peer review, and copy editing).
- Example 1: Creation of a new open textbook
- Example 2: A major adaptation of an existing open textbook (creation/addition of up to 50% new content)
- Approximate timeline for project completion: 1-2 years (maximum 3 years)
- Funding available: up to $25,000 per application
- Download the application form: **Large grant application**

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?
Tenure-track or tenured faculty and instructors employed by the University of Regina and its three federated colleges (Campion, Luther, and FNUniv). Applications from faculty/ instructors who are on term-appointment and sessional lecturers will also be considered. However, since their employment contract is temporary, applicants falling into one of these groups must make a convincing case that there is a very good prospect that the proposed textbook or supporting teaching material will be used in U of R/ federated college courses within one year of product completion.

Please submit your applications to Isaac Mulolani at open.textbooks@uregina.ca by Friday, 13 January, 2023 (11:59 pm SK time).

An information session about this funding opportunity will be held on Friday 25 November at 12:00 PM SK. Further information on the Open Educational Resource Publishing Program and current publications, go to: **uregina.ca/oer-publishing**

For more information on this call for proposals and the U of R Open Educational Resource Publishing Program, please contact Program Manager Isaac Mulolani at **open.textbooks@uregina.ca**.