Original Paper

An Interview with Hollie Bellinger: About OER

Hollie Bellinger[1]

Michael F. Shaughnessy[2]

[1] Golden Library, Eastern New Mexico University, Portales, New Mexico, USA

[2] Educational Studies Department, Eastern New Mexico University, Portales, New Mexico, USA

Abstract

Hollie Bellinger is the Government Information and Open Educational Resource (OER) Librarian at Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU) in Portales, New Mexico. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English Language and Literature from Grand Valley State University (GVSU) in Michigan and her master's in library and information sciences (MLIS) from the University of Washington. Throughout her education, Bellinger has worked in libraries, where she found her passion for information literacy and helping college students learn to research. Before her position at ENMU, Bellinger worked in many types of libraries, including a K-12 school library and a public library. She also worked as an adjunct librarian at GVSU. Being a first-generation college student, Bellinger became passionate about affordable and accessible course materials. She completed her Certification in Open Education Librarianship in September 2023 and is promoting OER and spreading the word to faculty members at ENMU. Here are her thoughts and knowledge on OER, especially in Higher education.

What exactly is OER?

To fully comprehend Open Educational Resources (OER), it is essential to understand Open Education. SPARC, a research and education non-profit advocacy group, defines Open Education as "Open Education encompasses resources, tools, and practices free of legal, financial and technical barriers and can be fully used, shared and adapted in the digital environment. Open Education maximizes the power of the internet to make education more affordable, accessible, and effective" (Note 1). With that definition in mind, we can understand how OERs are crucial to the Open Education movement. OERs come in various formats: textbooks, journal articles, course outlines, assignments, mixed media, and more. These materials use an open license that allows the resource to be freely used by others to retain, reuse, revise, remix, or redistribute.

When did it begin?

This is a difficult question because the Open Education movement started before OER, and that is an essential aspect of understanding the history. Martin Weller, the author of *The Battle for Open,* states that three components that led to the open education movement were Open University, which started in 1969; open source software, which began in the 1970s and picked up in 1983 when Richard Stallman started the GNU project to develop an operating software system which would allow users to adapt the software, and Web 2.0 came around in the mid-2000s (Note 2). These three components led to the main principles of Open Education. However, it is essential to note that in 1998, Wiley developed Open Content licenses, and in 2002, the Creative Commons was launched. Since the early 2000s, the movement we know as Open Education took off.

How does it impact higher education?

Higher education is structured in a way that only reinforces social inequality. Barriers to affordability, access, and inclusion exist. Many obstacles, such as affordability, hinder equal access to education. This is where Open Education and OER materials significantly impact higher education by providing accessible learning materials such as Open Textbooks, lesson plans, tests, scholarly articles, and other

resources that knock down the barrier between affordability and education. Open education can improve student success through the ability to customize curriculum, contextualize curriculum, make curriculum more inclusive, and provide opportunities for innovative pedagogy (Note 3). Open education also encourages faculty members to publish their scholarly works openly, which can contribute to their scholarship and tenure.

In a 2018 study, *The Impact of Open Educational Resources on Various Student Success Metrics*, the article reports the results of a large-scale study (21,822 students) regarding the impact of course-level faculty adoption of Open Educational Resources. Those courses that adopted OER saw a significant positive grade increase AND a significant decrease in grades earned of D, F, and withdrawals (Note 4). We can see here how the use of OERs profoundly addresses some of these issues:

- Helping us move closer to achieving educational equity in that access to course materials was broadened

- Improving the academic experience of students in this study by having a positive impact on grades and enrollment

- Helping to keep the most marginalized students in our classrooms. What's even more compelling from this study is that Pell-eligible students were even more positively impacted by adopting OER and immediate and forever free access to course materials.

Not having money to buy course materials makes a difference. Having immediate, accessible, and permanent access to course materials makes a difference.

How do we go about finding resources?

To find Open resources, I highly recommend speaking with a librarian. While there is the Open Textbook Library (OTL), OpenStax Hub, and various other databases for open resources, your librarian has the education, experience, and network to help you find the resources you seek. While faculty members are excellent researchers, they also have more pressing matters, like educating their students. Academic librarians help faculty members find the materials and resources they seek to make faculty's workload a bit easier. At ENMU's Golden Library, there are Open databases and a Library guide to help faculty, staff, and students find open resources, as well as an OER Librarian, me!

What are Open Textbooks?

Open textbooks, one type of Open Educational Resource or OER, are A (not THE) solution because they are licensed to be free forever, and they need to be downloaded only once to be used freely after that.

What is the open educational network (OEN)?

The Open Educational Network (OEN) is a community of higher education institutions that promote access, affordability, and student success through open textbooks and resources (Note 5).

What is the difference between Copyright and Creative Commons licenses?

Copyright gives the author exclusive rights to their work. Creative Commons (CC) works within copyright laws to grant everyone in the world permission to use their work in specific ways (Note 6). Under CC, all rights are granted except those specifically reserved. All CC materials may legally be redistributed to anyone indefinitely, and most CC can be revised and remixed before being redistributed.

What does open pedagogy mean?

Open Pedagogy is a teaching and learning practice that engages students as the authors and creators of information rather than just the consumers. An example could be creating an open educational toolkit on a subject. The students would all contribute to this toolkit and participate in the learning process through knowledge creation.

What are all the different types of CC licenses?

CC BY- Credit must be given to the creator.

CC SA-Adaptations must be shared under the same terms.

CC NC-Only noncommercial uses of the work are permitted.

CC ND- No derivatives or adaptations of the work are permitted (Note 7).

These licenses can be mixed and matched for the author to find the desired permission for their work. The ability to select what type of cc license a piece will be is also great for the consumer since it lets them know what they can do with the work.

CC0 or Public Domain- No conditions to the work.

Are there you would like to add?

I just wanted to highlight the difference between open access and inclusive access. Some publishers or companies will offer users access to their collection at a cost to get full access, called inclusive access. Open access will not cost consumers anything; they can share, reuse, and access it whenever at no cost.

Notes

Note 1. *Open education*. SPARC. (2023, September 29). https://sparcopen.org/open-education/

Note 2. Weller, M. (2014). *The Battle for Open: How openness won and why it doesn't feel like victory*. London: Ubiquity Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5334/bam

Note 3. Open Education Network. "Access, Affordability, Inclusion, and Academic Success: Intro to OER Adoption Workshop." August 2023. Available at https://z.umn.edu/oenfacultydeck23. This slide deck is open under a CC BY 4.0 International License.

Note 4. 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.

Note 5. About the Open Education Network – Modifying an Open Textbook: What You Need to Know. https://pressbooks.pub/oenmodify/front-matter/about-the-open-textbook-network/

Note 6. *Copyright and Creative Commons are friends*. Creative Commons. (n.d.). https://creativecommons.org/get-cc-savvy/copyright-creativecommons-are-friends/

Note 7. *About CC licenses*. Creative Commons. (2023, September 28). https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/cclicenses/