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Opportunities, Challenges, Impact!*

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From the Guest Editor



JACQUELYN RAY

Jacquelyn currently serves as the Director of Library Resources at Walla Walla Community College in Walla Walla, Washington. Wait...! How did a Washington guest editor sneak in to edit the *OLA Quarterly*? At the start of the editorial process for this issue Jackie served as the Director of Library and Media Services at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton, Oregon. Her interests center around student learning and supporting learning opportunities and environments that allow students to seek and cultivate their creative and/or scholarly pursuits. Jackie is also interested in supporting pathways to equity in education and along with many librarians, faculty, students and others across the country, she supports Open Educational Resources (OER) as one of the vital efforts that seek to remedy barriers to higher education.

As always, Oregon Librarians are on the cutting edge of identifying our patrons' crucial needs and creatively finding ways to remedy these needs. Providing our communities access to otherwise unobtainable resources that support growth and learning has always been among our shared goals as librarians. We know that by providing these resources, we are enhancing inclusive community engagement and providing a crucial contribution for both individuals and society as a whole.

A pressing issue at hand that speaks to both individuals and our society is access to higher education. Oregon's college students are facing increasing barriers to accessing a college education, opting to delay, or in many cases, permanently putting off attending college due to rising costs. K–12 schools also face seemingly endless budget constraints. Trimming the budget by aging out textbooks or limiting the purchase of textbooks to a “classroom only set” are budget strategies that often make it to the bargaining table. Surprisingly perhaps, it is not just the rising cost of tuition. The cost of textbooks has outpaced almost every other consumer good—including food, healthcare, and housing (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). We can close this gap. Academic Librarians have found themselves embracing a new opportunity with the advent of Open Educational Resources (OER). The Hewlett Foundation offers a definition of OER:



Open Educational Resources are teaching, learning and research materials ... in the public domain or (have an) open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. OER include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge. (The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2019).

The emergence of OER has become an avenue to mitigate this gap, and librarians are finding themselves leading the charge in OER advocacy and implementation that is carving out a pathway towards equity for our students.

This fall issue of the *OLA Quarterly* explores and celebrates the work of librarians as creators, collaborators, and innovators, who are sharing best practices and working where we can, to try to support the social justice issue of access to education. A common thread throughout these articles is the vital role of partnership, bringing out one another's key skills, all for a common goal of improving lives.

Adelaide Clark, and Dawn Lowe-Wincentsen, a science faculty member and Interim Library Director of the Oregon Institute of Technology, respectively, describe their collaboration to leverage OER in order to reduce the cost burden for their students. They reveal how the powerful transformation of the publication landscape permits creative, innovative OERs that are also easily adaptable and responsive to student feedback and learning.

Forrest Johnson and Michaela Willi Hooper from Linn-Benton Community College discuss the partnership they forged between the library and faculty to create an active learning environment where students become content creators by contributing to openly sourced online repair manuals.

Demonstrating the capacity for libraries and librarians to be leaders and advocates in the OER movement, Jennifer Lantrip, Faculty Librarian and Carol McGeehon, Library Director of Umpqua Community College (UCC) and Amy Hofer, Oregon's Statewide OER Coordinator, developed workshops and found funding sources to inform UCC faculty about available OER and engage them in the implementation process.

The necessity of librarians serving as advocates and experts in promoting equitable access is furthered in Colleen Sanders' investigation into sample contract language for a new, privatized, college bookstore at Clackamas Community College. In this surprising turn of events, Sanders and her colleagues found language curtailing OER use and were able to draft a response that helped to change the final contract language and undoubtedly maintained Clackamas' ongoing use of OER. Being an advocate is not a small task and finding that first single step to begin can be among the biggest challenges.

Amy Stanforth from Portland State University offers guidance and resources drawn from her experience in learning about OER. Her article offers some helpful tips and ideas on starting the OER conversation at your institution and is worth checking out! Long-time OER advocates just might find something new as well.



Our shared professional goals as librarians to innovate, collaborate, and better our world, always inspires. The emerging landscape that OER offers allows librarians to display some of their best work in advocacy, creating pathways to equity through resources, learning, and technology. I hope you find reading these works by our colleagues as an inspirational reminder of the unique capacity and facility librarians have in creating environments where access to resources and opportunities to learn are available to all. 🌍

References

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For compelling charts and data see also: Zook, C. (2017) “Infographic: Textbook Costs Skyrocket 812% in 35 Years.” Applied Educational Systems. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/y6y6y9oz>



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