

## First Aid for Student Cost: Helping Nursing Faculty Move Away From Textbook Purchase Requirements

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# First Aid for Student Cost: Helping Nursing Faculty Move Away From Textbook Purchase Requirements

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## Abstract

There is growing interest in the use of open educational resources to reduce student cost. Many repositories provide e-resources that can be modified and adopted by instructors, yet there are a number of barriers to adoption. In 2017 several nursing instructors at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro received mini-grants to redesign a course to reduce textbook purchase requirements. This paper describes liaison librarian support for the course redesigns.

## Open Educational Resources

Open educational resources (OER) are freely shared educational materials. They are available without “legal, financial, and technical barriers” (SPARC, n.d.). These might include readings, videos, and other materials. Free and open are not the same. The term *open* usually means a resource may be edited or changed.

There are so many open educational resource repositories with content for higher education: BCCampus, College Open Textbooks, MERLOT, OER Commons, OpenEd, OpenStax, OpenSUNY, Open Textbook Library, The Orange Grove, and others. The challenge is finding content that meets instructor needs. Instructors often prefer a traditional textbook, available from an authoritative organization, with supplementary materials such as quizzes and lecture aids. This sort of open content has been developed for commonly taught lower-level undergraduate courses. Finding open textbooks for the health sciences can be difficult, even with specialty sites such as POGO-e and JHSPH OpenCourseWare.

## Course Redesign Mini-Grants

In 2017, faculty at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro were encouraged to apply for mini-grants that would support the adoption of low-cost or free alternatives to expensive course materials. Each \$1,000 award was intended to be an incentive for the extra time that it would take an instructor “to identify new resources, adjust syllabi, and modify assignments” (University Teaching and Learning Commons, n.d.). Faculty were provided with an introduction to open educational resources and an overview of library licensed e-resources at their disposal, and they were paired with a liaison

librarian for the project. Faculty also had the support of an instructional design consultant. These existing services and resources were targeted to the goal of providing low-cost or free course materials.

Three nursing courses were redesigned:

- Nursing 420/470: Community Health Nursing
- Nursing 620: Law & Policy
- Nursing 705: Evidence-Based Practice

All instructors expressed interest in reducing costs. They wanted to remedy issues with previously required commercial textbooks: some content became quickly outdated, some did not fit the needs of the course, and reliance on readings alone did not appeal to multiple learning styles. These instructors discussed their course needs with the health sciences liaison librarian and worked with her to identify online course materials that could be made available to students free of charge.

## Finding Resources

Most instructors were interested in finding a traditional textbook that could be supplemented with videos and other nontext content. Few nursing textbooks were found in OER repositories, so the search was expanded to include other free online content and library-licensed e-resources.

The liaison librarian and the instructor each searched for materials to be reviewed by the instructor. Searching together and discussing results improved knowledge on both sides. The instructor was sometimes excited by materials that the librarian had not taken seriously, such as online activities found

in MERLOT II. These were some of the sources that were searched:

#### **Open or Free Resources**

- OER repositories
- Google, YouTube
- Government, professional, and nonprofit websites

#### **Library-licensed resource searches**

- WorldCat Local and GOBI3
- Streaming film databases such as Academic Video Online, Kanopy, DocuSeek2, and Swank Digital Campus
- Sage Research Methods
- LexisNexis Academic

Government agencies provided excellent materials that were easily adoptable for the law and policy course and also for the community health course. Videos on the legislative process, statistics and fact sheets on health conditions, *HealthyPeople 2020* of course, guides to clear health communication, and so on were available. These resources were obviously public domain, acceptable for using and sharing, and had clearly marked creation dates.

Professional organizations were also useful, as well as nonprofit organizations after extra scrutiny. There were informative and visually appealing resources available from the American Nurses Association (ANA), the National League for Nursing, the Kaiser Family Foundation, Khan Academy, and more. A free tutorial on the basics of APA Style from the American Psychological Association was especially appreciated. There were concerns about what sorts of use were permitted and how long these resources would continue to be available. Linking out to resources often satisfied the first concern but not the second.

A variety of library-licensed e-resources were considered. Investigation started with checking whether the instructor's favorite texts were available without heavy digital rights management restrictions, for instance one user at a time. This was not the case, but instructors were open to reviewing other materials and offering their own suggestions. The ANA's "Scope and Standards of Practice" e-books were useful; these and other titles are available to our library from OVID for 599 users at a time. Other relevant e-books with light or flexible digital rights

management were found from EBSCO, ProQuest, and other vendors. Reviewing these resources provided opportunities to discuss licensing and linking concerns related to library-provided e-resources.

Several instructors were interested in online videos. They wanted to find out whether the library could provide certain feature-length films and were also curious about what sorts of short videos were in the collection. Reviewing these resources led to discussions of embedded code and more discussions of licensing and copyright. For instance, Swank Digital Campus might be able to get the rights to provide a particular feature film, but more than a few weeks' notice would be needed. And a 20-year-old feature film found online was still under copyright, even though it was somewhat dated and someone had posted a copy of it.

Some instructors expressed interest in other library-licensed e-resources, for instance databases, specific journal articles, and NCLEX-RN questions from a database of practice tests.

Some instructors were interested in how-to resources created or found by the liaison librarian, for instance videos or Prezis introducing the library and how to use library resources, or library guides with links to some of the course resources. All instructors provided access to course resources through the Canvas Learning Management System, so library guides were reinforcement for major resources.

#### **Initial Project Benefits**

The main benefit of this project was increased student access to high-quality e-resources with no required purchases. The assistant dean for Collection Management, who is the project leader, has calculated cost savings for students. A nursing instructor who previously assigned a \$182 textbook was able to provide her 22 students with course materials at no charge. A nursing instructor who previously required the purchase of a \$116 textbook was able to provide 120 students with course materials at no charge. Another nursing instructor who had previously required the purchase of a \$200 textbook was able to provide 25 students with course materials at no charge. These three instructors were able to help their students avoid over \$22,000 in course material costs. This mini-grant project also led to greater knowledge and closer working relationships among nursing instructors and the liaison librarian. Other

instructors began contacting the liaison for help finding e-books for courses, or for help finding out what sort of use is allowed for an e-resource. Instructors were made aware of the high cost of student

textbooks and some began to explore alternatives. While the problem of student costs are far more extensive than could be addressed here, this project is a good step toward addressing that problem.

## References

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