

## **From Course Materials to Community Voices: Exploring Open Content with the Library** *Drs. Monica Brooks & Kim McFall (Marshall) and Derek Nuzum (Fairmont)*

Open publishing in academic libraries now spans far beyond traditional journals, textbooks, and even beyond the campus. Librarians who work with open publishing will share how faculty can incorporate varied open content formats across teaching, research, and community engagement models. Panelists will entertain questions to touch on real-world workflows and trade-offs they encounter when using or supporting some of the following open resource types:

### **1. Open Textbooks and Course Materials**

Full textbooks and supplementary materials released under an open license (Creative Commons) that allows for free digital access, sharing, and modification. *Includes remixing, adaptation, and emerging AI influences.*

- **Example** - A customized, open-source Introduction to Psychology textbook where the instructor has added localized case studies and removed chapters not covered in the syllabus.
- **Access benefit(s)** – Open materials eliminate the financial barrier of expensive commercial textbooks, ensuring every student has access to the required reading from the first day of class. By now we are all aware that we can adopt an existing, peer-reviewed open textbook from a major repository rather than creating one from scratch!
- **Trade-off(s)** - While adapting or remixing an open textbook (or using AI to generate supplemental quizzes) allows for ultimate customization, it requires a significant time investment from the instructor compared to using a commercial publisher's ready-made package.
- **Next step(s)** - Schedule a consultation with a subject-liaison librarian to conduct a search for existing open textbooks in your specific discipline.

### **2. Open journals and other faculty or program-led publishing**

Academic magazines that are completely free for anyone to read online, often created, edited, and managed directly by university professors or academic departments rather than for-profit publishers. *Academic/scholarly, professional or trade, popular zine, review journals and more.*

- **Example** - An online, peer-reviewed journal of undergraduate biology research that charges no subscription fees for readers and no publishing fees for authors.
- **Access benefit(s)** - Faculty can assign these open journal articles as required reading in place of expensive, paywalled scholarly literature, ensuring that every student has immediate, free access to peer-reviewed scholarly research from the first day of class.

- **Trade-off(s)** - Faculty may take on additional responsibilities—such as editing, peer-review coordination, mentorship of student authors, and long-term journal maintenance—that are typically handled by commercial publishers and may not always be fully recognized in tenure or promotion processes.
- **Next step(s)** - Provide institutional support by partnering with the library or scholarly communications office to offer hosting, training, and editorial infrastructure (e.g., journal platforms, metadata support, preservation), and formally recognize faculty-led publishing as scholarly service or teaching innovation in evaluation guidelines.

### 3. Open Media

Any type of multimedia instructional content that is openly licensed, allowing educators to embed, share, and sometimes edit the media without copyright infringement. *Includes audio and visual formats used for instruction such as podcasts, instructional videos, and course lecture content.*

- **Example** - A series of openly licensed 5-minute animated videos explaining complex statistical formulas, embedded directly into the course's online learning modules.
- **Access benefit(s)** - Open media supports universal design for learning (UDL) by providing multimodal options (visual and auditory) for students who may struggle with traditional text-heavy materials. Instructors can create or use educational podcasts or YouTube videos published under Creative Commons licenses to supplement weekly readings.
- **Trade-off(s)** - When sharing one's own course lecture content or podcasts openly, a major trade-off is the potential loss of control over how the content is contextualized or reused by others on the internet. Additionally, ensuring all media is fully accessible (e.g., providing accurate closed captions) requires extra labor.
- **Next step(s)** - Work with library support or statewide partners to host and openly license your recorded lecture content in the Open Learning institutional repository.

### 4. Open Assignments and Pedagogy Content

Refers to syllabi, lesson plans, assignment prompts, and grading rubrics that educators share openly with one another. *Content readily available for adopting and remixing.*

- **Example** - A "renewable assignment" prompt where, instead of writing a disposable essay, students are tasked with writing or editing Wikipedia articles on historical events, using an openly shared rubric.
- **Access benefit(s)** - Provides faculty with access to high-quality, tested teaching strategies, reducing prep time and improving the pedagogical experience for students. Instructors can incorporate open assignment prompts that ask students to create public-facing materials, such as infographics or blog posts.
- **Trade-off(s)** - When implementing assignments that involve sharing student work openly, faculty must carefully navigate student privacy, FERPA regulations, and consent. The trade-off is balancing the public impact of the assignment with the student's right to remain anonymous or opt out.
- **Next step(s)** - Meet with an instructional designer or librarian to find repositories of open syllabi or assignment prompts relevant to your course.

## 5. Institutional Repository Publishing

Campus or state-hosted digital archive designed to collect, preserve, and provide open access to the intellectual output of the institution's community. *Includes monographs, journals, papers, and undergraduate research or other student-created content.*

- **Example** - An end-of-semester project where a class collaboratively researches local community history and publishes a digital anthology of their findings in the university repository.
- **Access benefit(s)** - It democratizes access to student research that would otherwise be hidden on a hard drive, giving students a permanent, citable link to their work to share with future employers or graduate programs. Faculty can design capstone courses where the final deliverable is an open-access journal article or dataset archived in the repository.
- **Trade-off(s)** - Publishing student-created content openly requires strict navigation of third-party permissions. If students use copyrighted images or data in their work, faculty and students must spend time clearing those rights, which can be administratively burdensome.
- **Next step(s)** - Contact the repository librarian to set up a branded collection space specifically for your course's final projects and learn about student consent workflows.

## 6. ETDs (Electronic Theses and Dissertations)

The final, book-length research projects written by master's and doctoral students that are published online in an institutional repository for free. (Vendor-supplied content is not free!). *Locally-housed in the library's repository or listed within national databases such as EBSCO or ProQuest.*

- **Example** - A recent PhD graduate's dissertation on the impact of climate change on streams in Appalachia is available for anyone in the world to download as a PDF from the home university's repository.
- **Access benefit(s)** - Faculty can direct students to open ETDs to model graduate-level research and formatting, giving them free access to recent, hyper-specific scholarship produced right at their own institution.
- **Trade-off(s)** - ETDs can be densely written, highly technical, and very long, meaning faculty may need to spend extra time helping students navigate. Some ETDs are temporarily restricted to protect future publication plans or sensitive data. Even when an ETD is openly accessible, figures, images, datasets, or articles reproduced within it may be under third-party copyright.
- **Next step(s)** - Have students "curate" an ETD rather than read it cover-to-cover—assign small groups to create annotated guides, abstracts-in-plain-language, or annotated tables of contents for selected dissertations, then share these as open teaching resources that help future students engage with institutional research more confidently. Leverage AI tools to assist in compiling guides. Consult librarians to determine what uses are permitted; add instructional preparation time to ensure proper use.

## 7. Community-focused Publishing

May include local history, public scholarship, and community-created collections from organizations, associations, museums, and historical societies. Historical documents, stories, oral histories, and research created in partnership with (or directly by) the local community that is made freely available online. *Websites, repositories, digital archives, databanks, zine collections, and more.*

- **Example** – Clio ( [https:// theclio.com/](https://theclio.com/) ) is a nonprofit, crowd-sourced educational web and mobile app that connects people to nearby history, culture, and place-based storytelling using GPS and interactive mapping.
- **Access benefit(s)** - Faculty can focus on local history using the app to highlight public scholarship collections into their classes to foster community-engaged learning. Students can be asked to develop a walking tour for a specific focus within the community (i.e. Underground Railroad stops in WV and OH) or enhance existing listings.
- **Trade-off(s)** - Because community-created, open public-history collections often incorporate contributed images, oral histories, and documents from many sources, faculty and students must be particularly mindful of rights, permissions, and attribution. This can require additional time to verify image licenses, assess consent for oral histories, and clarify what can be reused, remixed, or publicly shared— especially when students are enhancing or publishing content on open platforms like Clio.
- **Next step(s)** – Dispatch students to perform research with rights literacy. When students create a Clio entry or walking-tour stop, ensure they include a short rights statement to explain why their chosen images, audio, or sources are appropriate for open use (e.g., public domain justification, Creative Commons license, or original creation). This will encourage them to adopt best practices when using open sources while adding additional rights info to remixed content or expanded entries. Don't forget your librarians can usually assist with rights management and copyright questions.

### OER LibGuides:



**AI for OER Discovery: OER Definitions and Related Information** by Derek Nuzum (Fairmont) <https://library.fairmontstate.edu/c.php?g=1468175>

**Open Educational Resources** by Larry Sheret, Dr. Margaret Sullivan, & Lindsey Harper (Marshall) <https://libguides.marshall.edu/OpenEducationalResources>



**Open Educational Resources (OER)** by Amanda Proper (WVLA) & Gena Chatten (Marshall) hosted by the WV Library Commission <https://wvlguides.org/wvpoer>

### ***Need help?***

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