Open Books

Save a student money & refresh your materials

As an instructor, I recently replaced two very expensive books and outdated programs with one inexpensive book and a few OpenSource applications. The web publishing industry has moved on; my students need to learn how individuals are communicating today.

I'm also a student; this semester I rented a text. It made me wonder, what other affordable *and* legal options are available?

WHAT IS OER?

OER stands for Open Educational Resources. Essentially, OER are materials made freely available for teaching and learning. That begs the question: "Made available by who?" Anyone can release materials into creative commons, and we want our students to use peer-reviewed, vetted information. The majority of OER products are built by educators.

WHO USES OPEN TEXTBOOKS?

I found two resources listing instructors, by university, adopting open textbooks; 64 entries ranging from 2009 through 2012 are adopters of the "Collaborative Statistics" text. What is available? There are online lists of open textbooks by subject area that indicate whether the text was peer reviewed. Those subjects are listed in the sidebar.

Digging further, I came across grants funding open textbooks. The UI Open Source Textbook Initiative received a $150,000 grant to "design, create, and implement open-source educational materials for use in introductory college courses." They succeded. "Sustainability: A Comprehensive Foundation" is the result of three campuses collaborating to create a work that is free. Furthermore they intend to update it. That makes it current.

REPUTABILITY

The best resource I found is Open Stax College with nine texts out and four more in the works. From the Open Stax website I saw 236 educational institutions adopted at least one of the open textbooks they offer. These textbooks are peer reviewed.

ChemWiki is another online resource I found. It lists seven colleges or universities on the College Open Textbooks website under the list of adopted texts.

MODIFY YOUR COURSE?

What would it look like if a course you were involved with had no books or if the materials were free?

It's not too late to make a change. If you're an instructor teaching this Fall, your course materials list isn't due until mid March.

If you are curious http://cnx.org is a great place to search content by subject, author, publication date, and more.

RESOURCES

- https://openstaxcollege.org/
- http://www.illinoiseducator.illinois.edu/opentxt/
- http://www.collegeopentextbooks.org/opentextbookcontent
- http://cnx.org

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Math
Music
Philosophy
Political Science
Psychology
Science
Sociology
Statistics & Probability

Many online events will herald the third annual Open Education week, March 10-15, 2014.