

AN INVALUABLE EDUCATIONAL MULTI-TOOL: OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

"Open Educational Resources (OER) are learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, re-use, re-purpose, adaptation and redistribution by others."
(UNESCO, 2019)

Open Educational Practices (OEP) "are defined as practices which support the (re)use and production of OER through institutional policies, promote innovative pedagogical models, and respect and empower learners as co-producers on their lifelong learning path."
(Ehlers, 2011)

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ATTRIBUTION

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1
In response to escalating learning costs, the adoption of OER and OEP is gaining momentum, reshaping educational landscapes across local, regional, national, and global levels. To foster this energy, the Open Educational Resources Collective, a Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) initiative, was established to facilitate collaborative authoring and publishing of open textbooks in targeted priority disciplines, with a preference for the inclusion of local and indigenous content across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Beginning as a successful two-year pilot from 2022-2023, the CAUL OER Collective evolved into a vital service under the CAUL Open Educational Resources Strategic Enabling Program through to 2025.

With a membership of almost 90% of CAUL member Australian universities and 100% of New Zealand universities, the Collective has succeeded in publishing 38 open textbooks with over 80 in progress.



The Collective's inclusive approach accommodates institutions at varying stages of OER adoption, ensuring that each member can contribute and benefit from shared resources and expertise. This initiative exemplifies the spirit of open collaboration by leveraging CAUL's network to promote knowledge sharing and joint project ventures across diverse academic backgrounds and cultures. Through the Pressbooks publishing platform, and with supportive frameworks, the CAUL OER Collective creates an environment where innovation thrives, and collective goals are achieved collaboratively.

To accelerate the progress of the initiative, the Collective has awarded \$92,500 in grant funding to 33 projects motivating the OER community. Additionally, themed monthly webinars provide regular opportunities to unite members and develop a community of practice where they showcase their work, learn and connect with like-minded professionals.

As this poster presents, the development of OER and OEP is a valuable and justifiable endeavour that can benefit professional and institutional educational strategies affecting regional change.



2
Free to read, download, share and adapt.
OER remove a serious cost barrier for students when assigned rather than an expensive textbook.

"Australian students are increasingly impacted by restrictive and/or costly access to digital readings" (Lambert & Fadel, 2022, p. 1).

3
Authors retain copyright.
Many traditional publishing agreements require authors to sign over their copyright. Choosing to publish under an open licence in an OER provides authors with greater flexibility and control over their work.

4
Access anytime, anywhere.
Learners have the flexibility to explore content before and after their study periods. This allows them to preview material before enrolling and to continue benefiting as lifelong learners beyond their formal education.

5
Partner with students.
Co-create content with students to increase active engagement in the learning process.

Students can even add to their academic portfolio prior to graduation by co-publishing an OER.

6
Strategy to boost enrolment.
Institutions may increase enrolment by showcasing their commitment to reducing student living costs by promoting courses as Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC).

Southern Cross University's Bachelor of Psychological Science OER initiative is saving students between \$2,000-\$4,000 over the course of their degree.

7
Link to key national and global strategies.
OER aligns with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality Education, "which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

The adoption of OER can also support the success of recommendations outlined in the Australian Universities Accord Final Report, which proposes a long-term reform plan for the higher education sector aimed at meeting Australia's future skills requirements.

8
Easy to update and customisable.
Unlike print textbooks and other static sources, OERs can be quickly enhanced through direct user edits or by integrating user feedback. This author who wishes to remain anonymous, turned to OER for this reason:

"I had written a ... chapter for a textbook...which was published in 2008. I am still getting royalties for that textbook, which I am horrified by because it is so out of date that it's embarrassing."

"So, I actually approached the publishers and said, we really need to update this textbook. And the publisher came back and said, "oh no, it's fine, (your area) is now embedded in everything. We don't need a new textbook." And I'm thinking, that's not what I'm seeing in the classroom. That's not what I'm hearing from students, from colleagues."

9
Localised content.
Many existing textbooks have an international focus and rarely include local Australian or New Zealand context.

Certain specialised subjects might not appeal to commercial publishers but remain valuable for learners such as "A Teacher's Guide to Outdoor Education Curriculum: Victorian Edition."

10
Quality and relevance.
Quality and relevance are key aspects of OERs, providing educators with a platform to share their knowledge and expertise. This fosters the creation of high-quality learning resources that can be adopted and enhanced by others, potentially increasing citations due to their broad accessibility.

11
Amplify voices of underrepresented communities.
OERs enable the acknowledgment of groups and individuals frequently marginalised within academic circles.

Textbooks authored by established experts often overlook knowledge and experiences from minority and underrepresented groups. In contrast, OERs with open licences can be adapted or expanded to prominently feature the contributions of underrepresented communities, including Indigenous peoples and LGBTQI+ individuals.

Ehlers, U.-D. (2011). Extending the territory: From open educational resources to open educational practices. *Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning*, 15(2), [1-10].
Lambert, S. R., & Fadel, H. (2022). *Open textbooks and social justice: A national scoping study*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. <https://www.acses.edu.au/research-policies/15394-2-2/>
UNESCO. (2019). *Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER)*. <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-open-educational-resources-oer>