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The More We Work Together: Leading Campus OER Initiatives through Library-Faculty Collaboration

Mandi Goodsett
Cleveland State University, a.goodsett@csuohio.edu

Barbara Loomis
Cleveland State University, b.i.loomis@csuohio.edu

Marsha Miles
Cleveland State University, m.a.miles24@csuohio.edu

The More We Work Together: Leading Campus OER Initiatives through

Library-Faculty Collaboration

Mandi Goodsett, Barbara Loomis, and Marsha Miles

Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Abstract

With the rising costs of tuition and textbooks, Open Educational Resources (OERs) are becoming increasingly important. The university library, in collaboration with faculty, is a natural leader of OER initiatives at institutions of higher education. Cleveland State University's Michael Schwartz Library embraced this leadership role by assisting a faculty member with developing an OER, which involved balancing the workload between librarians and the faculty member, determining successful modes of communication, taking advantage of graphic design skills, and more. The success of this initial collaboration has led the Library to expand its support of OER initiatives on campus.

Keywords: open educational resources, open access, collaboration, faculty collaboration, liaison librarian, institutional repository

Introduction to the column

Collaboration refers to working together cooperatively in an effort to achieve a common goal. Academic libraries collaborate in a variety of ways, with people and departments on campus as well as people and organizations off campus. Libraries that collaborate effectively are able to extend the impact of the library far beyond the library's physical spaces or online presence. The goal of this column is to look at some of the innovative ways libraries are collaborating in an effort to better serve students, their institutions, and their communities.

Introduction

Cleveland State University (CSU) is an urban campus in downtown Cleveland,Ohio. It has an enrollment of more than 17,000 students and over 500 full-time faculty. The Michael Schwartz Library has thirteen librarians and twenty-five support staff

to serve the campus community and fulfill the library's mission of bringing people and information together.

With help from the bepress Kickstarter program, CSU's institutional repository (IR) launched in March of 2012 using bepress Digital Commons (DC). By 2013, the EngagedScholarship@CSU team included two librarians and one staff member. Since the retirement of the founding librarian, the team has been reduced to two. The Digital Initiatives Librarian works on faculty and student scholarship projects, the Project Coordinator manages conferences and e-books, and they both work with e-journals and open educational resources (OERs).

The EngagedScholarship@CSU team offers expertise and meets individually or with groups to promote opportunities for faculty and students to utilize library services and participate in the IR. Subject librarians help with their assigned departments to make EngagedScholarship@CSU a success. There are more than 11,000 papers in over 680 disciplines, 200 books, thirteen conferences, six e-journals, image galleries, videos, music collections, and more in the repository.

While working on EngagedScholarship@CSU, subject librarians are engaging with faculty in new ways. They are strengthening relationships with faculty in their assigned departments by becoming familiar with their scholarship and helping them create SelectedWorks pages—more than 280 to date. SelectedWorks is a companion program of DC that showcases faculty research and creative activities. The CSU College of Business is creating pages for all faculty in preparation for its accreditation process, and they are working with the Business Librarian to accomplish this goal.

The library is becoming known across campus for providing expertise in hosting and promoting scholarship, e-journals, and events and conferences. Because of this, the library has developed a stronger relationship with the campus community and has initiated open access (OA) and OER discussions on campus. The library has also used EngagedScholarship@CSU to build relationships with the greater Cleveland community through conferences and events.

Open educational resources

With the high cost of college education, many students are looking to save money any way they can. One way they cut costs is by taking classes without purchasing the expensive textbooks. Unfortunately, this can affect their grades and, ultimately, student retention and graduation rates (Donaldson, Nelson, and Thomas 2012).

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are "teaching, learning or research materials that are in the public domain or released with an intellectual property license that allows for free use, adaptation, and distribution" (UNESCO 2016). One misconception faculty often have regarding OERs is their level of quality. If OERs are freely available, are they going to be of the same quality as traditional textbooks that cost hundreds of dollars? Just like any other resource, OERs need to be evaluated. Fortunately, some are peer reviewed and/or included in reputable open textbook collections, which facilitates their evaluation.

Libraries play a key role in the open textbook movement by leveraging existing services and expertise. The library's staff is already involved in publishing initiatives and offers hosting services to faculty for e-journals and e-books. Therefore, it was logical to also host OERs in the IR.

In 2014, the Michael Schwartz Library hosted open textbook workshops for CSU support staff and faculty to explain what open textbooks are and why they are important to help students succeed. The workshops outlined how faculty can create OERs and how staff can support faculty in the process. Following these workshops, Dr. Adrienne Gosselin, a professor in the English Department, showed interest in publishing a collection of teaching materials as an OA textbook in EngagedScholarship@CSU. The materials focused on Charles Chesnutt, an African American author from Cleveland who was prolific in the early twentieth century. In her words, "While there are numerous websites devoted to Charles Chesnutt, few pay more than passing attention to his association with Cleveland, Ohio, where he was born and where he returned to live and to write until his death in 1932. Yet it is difficult to imagine Chesnutt's accomplishments without considering the opportunities afforded him because of Cleveland both in his early life and later years."

This faculty member had a wealth of material to fill this gap, and she worked with a graduate student to create a website about Chesnutt's life and work for those interested in teaching about Chesnutt,including students from Dr.Gosselin's classes. Unfortunately, after the graduate student left CSU, Dr. Gosselin could no longer access the website to edit it. After conversations with Dr. Gosselin, it was decided that EngagedScholarship@CSU would provide a home for these materials.

Process, formatting, and design

As previously mentioned, establishing itself as an online publisher prepared the Michael Schwartz Library to be at the forefront of the OA movement and encourage CSU faculty to create or adapt open textbooks to expand their teaching and learning resources and to save students money.

Some key elements need to be in place before beginning an OA publishing program: libraries must select a publishing platform, establish a publishing mission, outline services, create branding, and provide a printing service. Of the many publishing platforms, the library chose Digital Commons (DC) powered by bepress (digitalcommons.bepress.com), which provides publishing software training and support. In addition, DC offers certification courses in repository management and scholarly publishing and has created an online collaboratory where the DC user community can share ideas. The Michael Schwartz Library outlines services its staff can provide, such as cover art design, text formatting, and library support, including consultation with a librarian regarding copyright, the license agreement, description of the resource, and keywords. A brief abstract or description, plus keywords, are necessary to establish online search criteria after publication.

Thelibrary'simprintis"MSLAcademicEndeavors"andispartofitsbrandingand publishing identity. The library registered for ISBNs (International Standard Book Numbers), the global standard for identifying titles, and a SAN (Standard Address Number) at ISBN.org by Bowker, which defines the SAN as "a unique seven digit identifier used to signify a specific address of an organization in (or served by) the publishing industry" (Bowker 2016).

In addition to publishing OERs in EngagedScholarship@CSU, the library provides printing options for patrons who want to purchase print copies. Once a faculty member's OER is ready for publication, the team sends a PDF of the document to the library's Digital Production Unit (DPU), which establishes the price, accepts payments, and ships or holds the book for pickup. The DPU prints

two copies and adds them to the library's collection. Authors also have the option of using the university's bookstore to print an OER to sell at cost. For many of its design needs, the library uses Adobe Creative Suite, including Photoshop for image editing; Illustrator for creating cover art, fliers, and postcards; and InDesign for formatting books. More recently, the library became one of the first members of the Open Textbook Network (OTN), a national pilot program that "promotes access, affordability, and student success through the use of open textbooks" (Open Textbook Network 2016) and, as a member, has been given free access to Pressbooks for book publishing and e-book formatting. This online authoring software can help authors create a book in a variety of formats (Pressbooks 2016).

There are also cover templates and images available online that will help the team members create authors' cover art. Shutterstock has millions of photos, templates, and more from which the library can select and purchase for its publishing and marketingneeds(shutterstock.com).WhentheEngagedScholarship@CSUteamandthe appropriate subject librarian met with Dr. Gosselin to discuss her Charles Chesnutt OER, Dr. Gosselin's vivid description of the project and its intended audience helped determine the cover's design.

OER project collaboration

Subject librarians at the Michael Schwartz Library are assigned departmental subject areas based on their expertise. These librarians act as liaisons to those departments, developing their collections, conducting instruction in their classes, and providing research consultations for their faculty and students.

The subject librarian involved in this project was the Performing Arts & Humanities Librarian, and she was responsible for providing subject librarian services to the English department, among others. The department consists of approximately twenty faculty members, not including those faculty and graduate assistants who teach first-year English composition courses. Over the three semesters during which the Performing Arts & Humanities librarian was employed at CSU, she taught seventy-two sessions for the department and was asked to speak at the department's faculty retreat twice.

This department was also especially active in their use of EngagedScholarship@CSU. In addition to the seventy-nine articles and book chapters uploaded to the repository, the department also included three departmental newsletters and records for seventeen books. The subject librarian was asked to present about EngagedScholarship@CSU at the department's faculty retreat in the fall of 2015 and was invited to publish a short article about the repository in the fall 2015 departmental newsletter. Both activities further increased interest in the repository. The positive relationship between the English department's subject librarian and the department faculty and staff greatly facilitated the collaborative nature of the OER creation process.

Negotiating permissions

Some of the OER's content was the text of several short stories written by Chesnutt, which would correspond with lesson plans and reading guides developed by Dr. Gosselin and her students. Because the text was in the public domain, the subject

librarian was able to find most of the stories in Project Gutenberg, but three of the stories appeared only in a publication by the Ohio University Press. The text was in the public domain, but the librarian decided to reach out to the publisher to gain permission to use the text alone (without commentary) in this OA resource. Fortunately, she was granted permission and all of the text was included in the final product.

Images played an important role in the content of the OER. Once again, many of the images were old enough to be in the public domain, but the library team was careful to ask permission from libraries and museums before using the content. At the advice of another English faculty member, each image was accompanied by a note that read "Courtesy of [library or museum name]."

In addition to obtaining permission to use text and images in the OER, it was important for the library team to obtain permission to use the work of past students who had provided content included in the OER. The faculty member contacted each student involved in the project, some of whom had graduated, and requested his or her signature on a license to publish. The license to publish, which the faculty member was also required to sign, was developed by the library at the outset of its publishing initiative.

Because all material in EngagedScholarship@CSU is licensed as OA, it is important for the library to help faculty understand Creative Commons (CC) licensing and encourage them to choose an appropriate option. Digital copies of all permission and copyrights associated with the OER are stored in the "dark archive," which means that they are not visible on the public side of the site. The CC license is displayed on the public-facing side of the site.

Promoting OERs

With permissions obtained and a CC license selected, the library can publish a book and make it accessible. Once a book is published in EngagedScholarship@CSU, it is automatically assigned a unique URL that can be accessed by anyone online. There are numerous ways to promote OERs and make them discoverable: OERs published in EngagedScholarship@CSU are automatically available to researchers from hundreds of institutions in the DC and Teaching Commons networks, and they are readily discoverable on Google and other search engines (Teaching Commons 2016). They can also be found in OhioLINK and WorldCat once the library's cataloger creates a record in the local catalog. The Ohio Library and Information Network allows students and faculty at more than eighty-five public and private campuses to request books electronically and have them delivered to their nearby library. A press release can be sent to local media, and the author can post an announcement on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and SelectedWorks. Students can directly access the teaching material from the URL provided on syllabi. Often, conferring with faculty directly can help determine the most effective avenues for promoting their works.

Building relationships and workflows

The subject librarian for the English department worked closely with the faculty member throughout this project. In the process, she learned several important lessons about facilitating faculty relationships in the service of collaborative

projects. One of the first issues that emerged was a need to create bridges between the faculty member and the technology required to host and share her content. When the library team was first introduced to the project, the content was being hosted on a GoDaddy website that was poorly maintained and nearly impossible to access. With the help of the library team, Dr. Gosselin was able to extract the content and move it to the well-managed, user-friendly EngagedScholarship@CSU platform. The subject librarian also often served as "translator" for the faculty member when technical issues arose or when she needed her content to be accommodated by the technology in a certain way. For example, when the faculty member shared her hope to organize the chapters of the OER in a particular order, the library team used their technological expertise to realize her vision. For collaborative projects that incorporate technology, the library team should be prepared to provide technological support for faculty as needed.

As this type of project was new to both the library team and the faculty member involved, some initial work was required to determine how best to balance responsibilities. Clearly, the content-specific tasks would be accomplished by the faculty member, but the assignment of proofreading, formatting, organizing, and troubleshooting was less evident. The library team was eager to help however possible, but at times the lack of content expertise proved a barrier. For instance, when the faculty member found broken hyperlinks in the content of the OER, the library team could identify the broken links throughout, but it was up to the faculty member to identify replacement links. It was helpful to establish responsibilities like these as early as possible and to be flexible to the needs of the faculty member.

At times, work with the faculty member was facilitated by the faculty member's own connections on campus. When the library team needed expert advice about citing images, the faculty member was able to consult a colleague in the English department who studies the use of illustrations in American literature. Taking advantage of these campus connections can increase project workflow efficiency and improve the final product.

Possibly the greatest challenge in collaborating with a faculty member, perhaps unsurprisingly, was navigating schedules and deadlines. While not all faculty members may have this preference, this particular faculty member asked the library team to set deadlines. This kept the group on track and ensured continued communication throughout the project. However, if the faculty member was unable to meet deadlines, little could be done; after all, it was primarily Dr. Gosselin's project. That said, consulting with her about her scheduling preferences before the project was even underway expedited the process and contributed greatly to the success of the collaboration.

Ultimately, the project belonged to the faculty member, and the library team served as a service point for its completion. For this reason, when personal priorities caused the faculty member to step away from the project, the library team was also required to halt work. Being prepared for projects to take a backseat to a faculty member's other priorities can help the library team react supportively as necessary.

As with any project involving multiple stakeholders, communication among members of the library team and the faculty member was essential. Initially the group communicated only by e-mail, but the faculty member did not seem to prefer this communication style. She would often visit the subject librarian to initiate an unannounced, albeit productive, meeting. She also tended to copy only the subject librarian on e-mails, meaning that the subject librarian had the responsibility of closing the communication gap by sharing pertinent information with the rest of

the team. In the future, the library team will ask the faculty member about his or her preferred mode of communication at the beginning of the project, instead of making assumptions.

To collaborate on the content of the project, the group decided to use Google Drive. This platform allowed the collaborators to upload documents to a shared location, track changes, make changes in real time, and share or invite others to edit documents. The greatest selling point for this tool was its availability for use by groups and individuals outside of the library network.

Conclusion

While the Michael Schwartz Library has had success collaborating on this project, the library continues to search for ways to strengthen its support platform for faculty hoping to create or use OERs. As mentioned earlier, in addition to encouraging the development of OERs on campus, CSU is a member of the Open Textbook Network. Through this organization, there is money available for faculty at member institutions to receive a stipend for reviewing textbooks included in the library. Teachers and students worldwide can access these peer-reviewed textbooks from the Open Textbook Library, and traffic to this library has steadily increased since its creation in 2012.

The Michael Schwartz Library continues to educate faculty and promote OER services by presenting at faculty meetings and sharing promotional materials. Subject librarians help faculty understand that they don't have to write entire textbooks on their own. Faculty can collaborate with colleagues or use existing material such as syllabi, lectures, and workbooks, or they can adopt or adapt an open access textbookforuseintheirclassrooms.Thelibrary'shopeistocontinuetosupporttheOER movement by collaborating with faculty to increase the number of OERs hosted in EngagedScholarship@CSU.

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