

Supporting OER Creation

This presentation by Michelle Reed was presented at Open Education Texas: Policy, Practice, & Potential in Austin, Texas, on August 8, 2019. It is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license \(CC-BY\) license](#). Images are individually licensed as noted in source files.

Abstract

Cost savings realized through use of open educational resources (OER) draw much interest from policy makers and administrators, but the rhetoric of affordability isn't always a powerful motivator for the educators who make crucial decisions about which materials to adopt in their courses. In this presentation, a library publisher discusses factors that drive instructor engagement with OER and policies, processes, and platforms necessary to support OER creation.

Slides

Year 1: 2016-17



Students comparing OER in digital and print formats with traditional commercial textbooks. Sign reads: "Learn how you can get free textbooks. \$0 vs. \$287"

Slide Notes

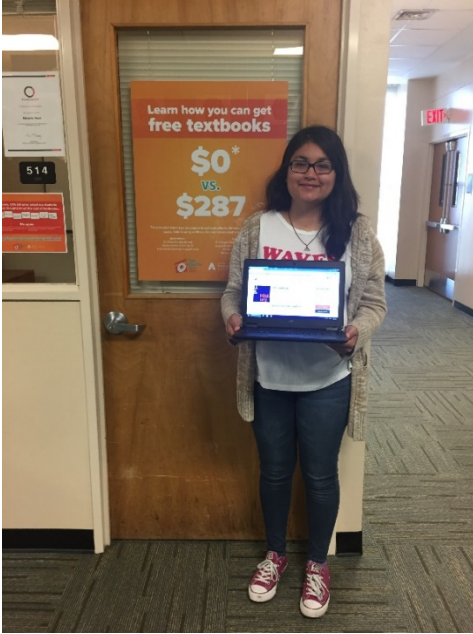
I plan to focus on supporting OER creation at UTA because it is one aspect of our program that is relatively unique, but I want to start by sharing a bit about the work we've been engaged in over the last three years to establish the context for creation. I started at UTA just after the start of the fall semester in 2016 and spent much of that first year focused on raising awareness.

We joined the Open Textbook Network and used our Open Textbook Workshop in February 2017 as the official kick-off of our open education work.

I started talking to students about OER as a way to find out what free resources were being used already on campus—through our Textbook Hero nominations learned of large OpenStax textbook adoption in UTA's Department of History.

[Event photos](#)

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Student gift card winner holding laptop displaying OpenStax US History website.



UTA Libraries' Textbook Hero Video Series: Episode 3 Kim Breuer and Alex Hunnicutt
381 views

Dr. Alex Hunnicutt of UTA's Department of History was nominated as a Textbook Hero and featured in [Textbook Hero Video Series](#). Hunnicutt says he has started "to really think highly of [open textbooks]."

Quote from Alex Hunnicutt from UTA Libraries' Textbook Hero video:

"I had used online textbooks before, and the experience was not a happy one. There were all these access codes and keys and things to unlock- just a technological nightmare to me. It would drag on for weeks and weeks. We're a third or halfway through the semester with students still trying to get access to the book. This wasn't that at all.... Give them a link and it worked and that's it. My sentence is longer than the time it took them to access the materials."



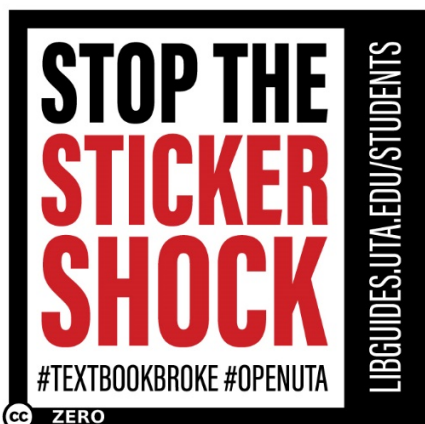
UTA Coalition for Alternative Resources in Education for Students ([UTA CARES](#)) banner

I also began reaching out to campus partners—our campus store, instructional designers, teaching and learning folks, advisors, student government, as well as colleagues throughout the libraries.

In 2017, we awarded the first round of UTA CARES grants. I left the program open-ended the first year, allowing up to \$5,000 per project for any type of

open education project. Despite my determination to focus on adoption in the short term, the call ended in all OER creation applications. That isn't to say that adoption wasn't happening. It just didn't require financial support (used intentionally - not "incentive").

Year 2: 2017-18



“Stop the Sticker Shock” stickers with a [CC Zero](#) designation with social media hashtags #TextbookBroke #OpenUTA and [URL](#) for more info.

In our second year we had a ton of student engagement. Our student body president took interest in OER, and we worked with other student volunteers on outreach (e.g., “Stop the Sticker Shock” campaign). They also presented about OER to various stakeholders, including to administrators in Deans Council.



The Semester You Learn to Walk (a lecture)

by Michelle Reed  March 6, 2018



This student-authored post is part of UTA Libraries' [Open Education Week](#) celebration. It was written by Ursula Abdala. If you're a UTA student interested in contributing a blog post related to educational resources, contact [Michelle Reed](#).

You start a semester with 700 dollars from working all through winter break.

- 365 (rent)
- 165 (parking on campus)
- 105 (car insurance)
- 10 (month supply of instant noodles)

I'll save you the trouble of doing math: by the first day of classes, you actually have 55 dollars to last until the next paycheck. None of the books you need for class will fit your 55-dollar budget. You will have to do without at first.

Ursula Abdala's [blog post](#) titled “The Semester You Learn to Walk (a lecture)” published in IRIS on March 6, 2018.

We published a student-authored blog post on resource affordability, localizing the stories we hear nationally about the impact of resource costs on students.



Collage of UTA students holder sign reading “I’ve spent \$---- on textbooks this semester!” Amounts listed: \$300, \$500, \$650, and \$350

Student government collected data from UTA students about how much money they spent on textbooks and how often they forgo purchasing their required materials.

Data collected Spring 2018: That semester, 63 students reported skipping the purchase of at least one required course resource and 58 reported purchasing all of their required resources. The same students reported skipping the purchase of at least one required course resource and 43 reported purchasing all of their required resources during Fall 2017.

Photos: © Katie Gosa (all rights reserved)

Additional Search Criteria

Meeting Start Time: greater than or equal to

Meeting End Time: less than or equal to

Days of Week: include only these days

Mon
 Tues
 Wed
 Thurs
 Fri
 Sat
 Sun

Instructor Last Name: begins with

Class Nbr: ?

Course Keyword: ?

Minimum Units:

Maximum Units:

Course Component: Count course as Summer census

Session: Educational Resources Cost

Mode of Instruction: Honors Course

Campus: Lab Safety Training Required

Location: Service Learning Designation

Course Attribute: Educational Resources Cost

Course Attribute Value:

CLEAR SEARCH

This is around the time we had to implement a course marking solution due to Senate Bill 810 (seen here buried in the “attribute” drop-down).

UTA’s schedule of classes search showing Course Attribute within Additional Search Criteria options. Attribute drop-down includes “Education Resources Cost” filter. From [Find OER Courses](#) guide.



Michelle Reed holds a chunk of charred hair.

I also caught my hair on fire in this timeline, which may not be relevant, though I'm convinced it is deeply symbolic and metaphorical.

Photo © Michelle Reed (all rights reserved)



Open = free + permissions

Meanwhile, interest in OER marched on. As I started sharing with more UTA educators the kind of freedom and flexibility afforded to them by open licenses, I discovered that they were consistently eager to take advantage of those open permissions. The localization and customization message of OER was resonating more than messaging focused on affordability.

[Photo](#) © Michelle Reed (CC BY)



It became clear that I needed an infrastructure to support our educators in exercising those permissions. For a number of reasons—cloning functionality, accessibility features, and robust export options being some of the big ones-- we bought access to Pressbooks EDU in February 2018.

We published our first OER that summer as Mavs Open Press. A print option is available for purchase at cost through [Lulu.com](https://www.lulu.com).

[Landing page](#) for *Creating Online Learning Experiences* by Matt Crosslin, et al., showing CC BY NC license and multiple download options, including PDF, EPUB, and MOBI.

All of this occurred with a backdrop of student frustration over access codes—i.e., proprietary homework platforms—and the threat of legal action from a used bookstore that caters to UTA students.

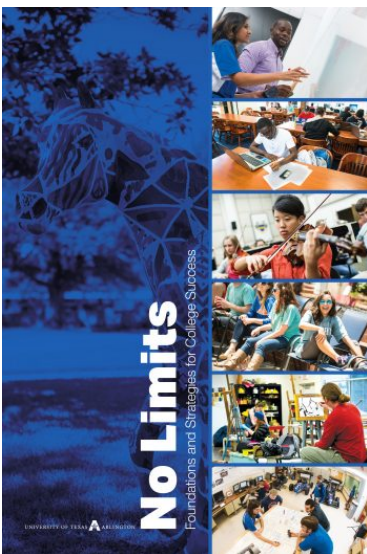
[“Digital Access Codes Spark a Bookstore Debate”](#) published by The Shorthorn on May 2, 2018.

Year 3: 2018-19

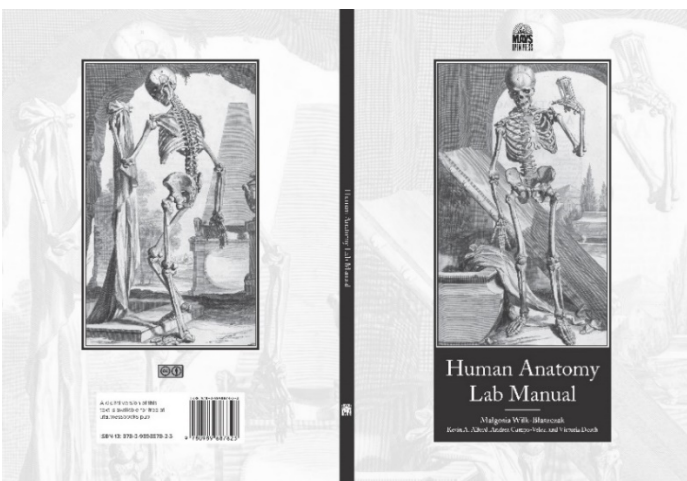


This last year has been focused on building the infrastructure to support OER creation and remix, onboarding new projects, training, building community, and officially publishing a number of texts.

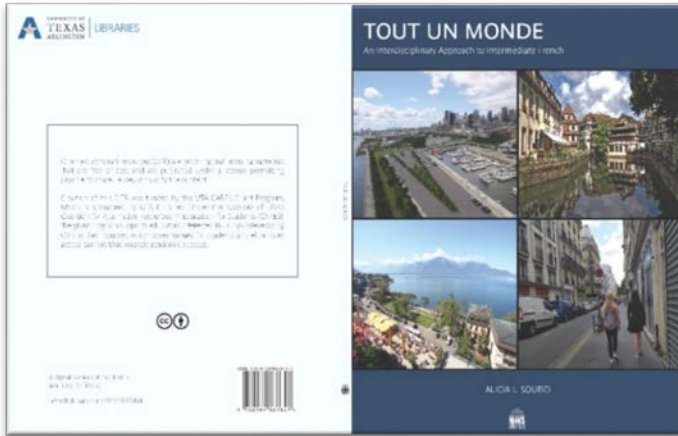
[PressbooksEDU News post](#) published August 30, 2018 titled “UTA Kicks Off OER Program with Eight Books in Development.”



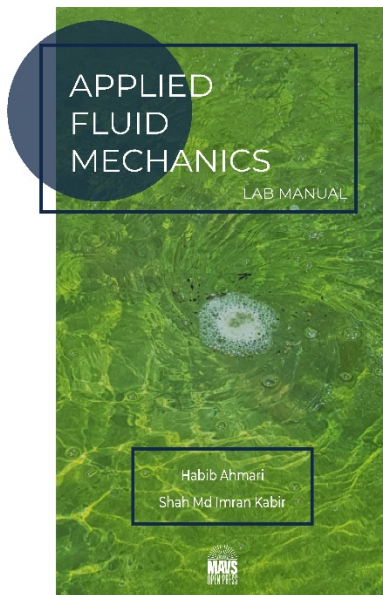
No Limits was a customized textbook used in first-year-experience/student success courses for about a decade. The university still owned copyright and was willing to move the content to Pressbooks and openly license it.



Human Anatomy Lab Manual by Malgosia Wilk-Blaszczak involved helping the project team locate and attribute openly licensed images. It is available for free in digital format, and a hard copy is available for purchase through the UTA Bookstore.




Creation of [*Tout un Monde*](#) by Alicia Soueid was among our first [UTA CARES grant projects](#). The UTA Bookstore reported that 15 students in Spring 2019 wanted to purchase a hard copy of the textbook (though the digital version was free) and was very disappointed that it wasn't available as a professionally bound text. A print version is available for purchase beginning Fall 2019.



[*Applied Fluid Mechanics Lab Manual*](#) by Dr. Habib Ahmari and Shah Md Imran Kabir received a 2018 UTA CARES Innovation Grant and will be officially published before start of Fall 2019.

Mavs Open Press



Mavs Open Press
Open Educational Resources from the University of Texas at Arlington

Mavs Open Press, operated by the University of Texas at Arlington Libraries (UTA Libraries), offers no-cost services for UTA faculty, staff, and students who wish to openly publish their scholarship. The Libraries' program provides human and technological resources that empower our communities to publish new open access journals, to convert traditional print journals to open access publications, and to create or adapt open educational resources (OER). Resources published by Mavs Open Press are openly licensed using Creative Commons licenses and are offered in various e-book formats free of charge. Optional print copies may be available through the UTA Bookstore or can be purchased through print-on-demand services, such as Lulu.com. Contact us at pressbooks@uta.edu.

Mavs Open Press: Open Educational Resources from the University of Texas at Arlington

Mavs Open Press Pressbooks' [catalog home](#) lists "officially published" OER.

Many of our resources are public during their pilot period before we "officially publish" them. To publish with us means that we've added the resource to our catalog home and archived a PDF in UTA ResearchCommons, UTA's institutional repository. At that point, edits must be tracked in the [versioning history](#) section of our OER. This is one way we aim to increase transparency.

Replace \$\$\$ Textbooks

- Free textbooks for high-enrollment courses
- Remixed, localized versions of existing OER

Training, Outreach, Distance Ed

- Manuals, guides, handbooks
- Proceedings and gray literature

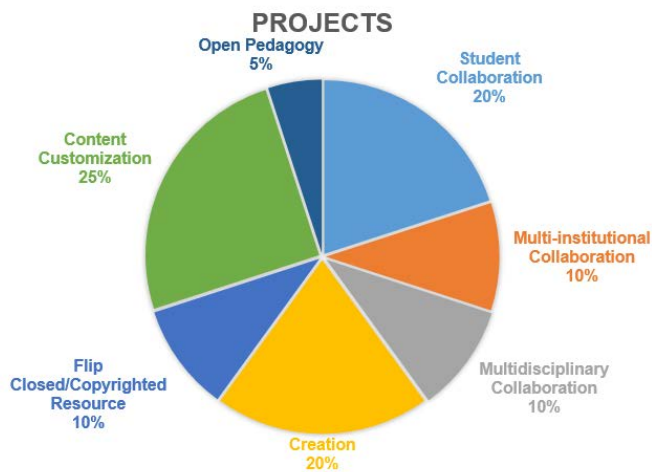
Public Domain Anthologies

- Anthologies of older work
- Government docs or other public material

Student & Community Authored

- University-community partnerships
- Student writing, class projects, e-portfolios

There are four broad categories of work we support from the OER arm of Mavs Open Press. This text was remixed from a [slide](#) generously shared by Steel Wagstaff, whose work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison had a huge impact on our program.



These stats were current as of March of this year, when we had published 3 OER, had 73 users on our Pressbooks platform, and 20 OER in some stage of development. We've onboarded at least 8 additional projects since then so we have closer to 30 UTA-authored OER currently in some phase of use or development.

Pressbooks Projects at UTA:

- 20% Student Collaboration
- 10% Multi-institutional Collaboration
- 10% Multidisciplinary Collaboration
- 20% Creation
- 10% Flip Closed/Copyrighted Resource
- 25% Content Customization
- 5% Open Pedagogy

Barriers

Chapter 5 - Student Feedback on Affordable Content in the Classroom at the University of Minnesota

Kristi Jensen

by Kristi Jensen, University of Minnesota ⁽⁴⁴⁾

Introduction

Throughout this book, colleagues from across higher education—including faculty, librarians, instructional designers, academic technologists, and others—explain the need for more affordable content options, and provide examples of specific processes and programs.

This wealth of information includes blueprints for how to implement an affordable content program, the pros and cons of particular approaches, and descriptions of why this work is important and how it impacts faculty and students.

One voice that is not as pronounced, perhaps, is that of the student. After providing an overview of two important and complex issues tied to affordable content efforts—student preference for print materials and the impact of digital versus print materials on student learning and comprehension—this chapter elevates that student voice by sharing feedback from students at the University of Minnesota (UMN) who enrolled in courses that utilized affordable course content.

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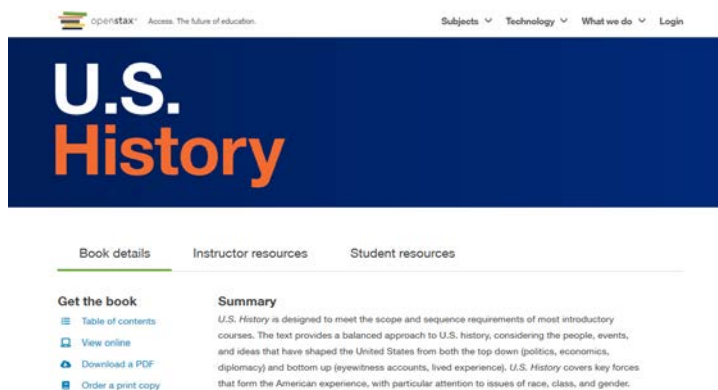
Research on Student Preferences Regarding Course Materials

Limitations of Current Surveys

Affordable course efforts often provide students with digital course materials. Our efforts at UMN are no exception, almost all of the faculty we work with utilize digital course materials. In one way or another, students can print many of those materials themselves, but the cost of this option (either the cost of supplies for personal printers or printing charges for University-provided printing) negatively impacts affordability. Since one of our goals is to save students money, we realized early in our work that we needed to develop an understanding of student attitudes and perceptions about digital materials, discover whether or not students choose to print the

Supporting OER creation has meant investing in resources that remove barriers for our educators, and there are many barriers. There are technical barriers. Say you have a PDF— how do you edit it? How do you get that content out so you can reuse it?

PDF of [book](#) chapter



OpenStax *U.S. History* [home](#)

How do you remix a textbook available as a website? And then where do you put it when you're done?

My team moves content into Pressbooks from other formats for our creators to help eliminate these technical barriers. We want to make it as easy as possible for them to immediately begin editing and customizing content.



A collection of pictograms denoting various types of disabilities, including braille, closed captioning, sign language, wheelchair, etc.

There are huge accessibility barriers. How do we ensure the resources we create can be used by everyone? That when we say “open” we actually mean open to all and not simply to those with no vision, hearing, or learning disabilities? Learning to be proactive about things like alt text is new, and sometimes quite overwhelming, to nearly everyone. It’s an educational barrier. We’ve incorporated accessibility training into our program, developed an accessibility statement, and implemented accessibility evaluations for each OER published by Mavs Open Press.

[“Disability Symbols”](#) is in the public domain.



© copyright all rights reserved

Another educational barrier is related to understanding and navigating intellectual property.



Add Creative Commons licensing to the already murky waters of fair use, and you have a lofty educational challenge.



Clock design with \$100 bills as clock face.

Finally, there is, of course, the barrier of time and labor (or the lack thereof) and money (or lack thereof) that can control our pace and potential. There are not insignificant challenges.

“[Time Is Money](#)” by Tax Credits via Flickr is licensed CC BY

Supporting OER Creation

Platforms

- Pressbooks, UTA ResearchCommons, open repositories

People

- OER support positions, subject librarians, financial support (student workers, stipends, summer salaries, course release, freelancers)

Processes

- Trainings & workshops, one-on-one consultations, documentation

Overcoming those barriers has meant investing in platforms, in people, and in processes. I put financial support, such as what we provide with the UTA CARES Grant Program, into the people category because those funds are most frequently used as investments in human resources: Hiring students. Paying a summer salary or course release. Working with freelance editors.

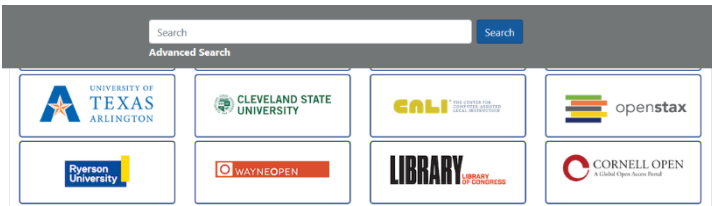
It has also meant surrounding myself with a team of people who can help our creators troubleshoot issues, remediate accessibility problems, and understand how to engage with open content. I have one student worker and a publishing specialist who supports OER part time.

This is a work in progress, but I’m finally getting closer to streamlining our process so every step is clear to everyone involved and we can accurately predict duration of projects. This process takes us from an initial OER consultation to creation, publication, and preservation of UTA-authored material.

OER CREATION PROJECT SCHEDULE

PROJECT	SCOPE	START	END	STATUS	OWNER	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE	START TIME	END TIME	START DAY	END DAY	START MONTH	END MONTH	START YEAR	END YEAR
	Revised Prepper - OER request															
	add															
	update															
	revise															
	publish															
	add															
	update															
	revise															
	publish															
	Revise Prepper - Revision															
	add															
	update															
	revise															
	publish															

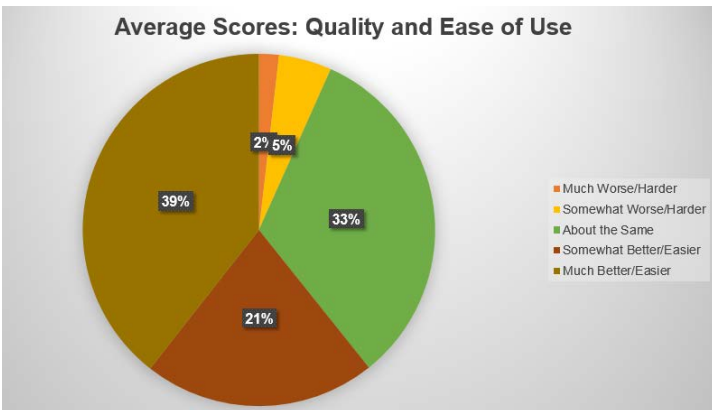
OER Creation Project Schedule spreadsheet modified from Covey template.



Screenshot of [OASIS Source page](#) showing University of Texas at Arlington.

It also includes getting our content indexed in existing open repositories so more people can discover, use, and benefit from it. Examples: Open Textbook Library, OER Commons, directly in meta search tools (e.g., OASIS from SUNY)

Collecting Data



Average Scores - Quality and Ease of Use:

- 39% Much Better/Easier
- 21% Somewhat Better/Easier
- 33% About the Same
- 5% Somewhat Worse/Harder
- 2% Much Worse/Harder

With both our grant projects and the publishing projects that do not receive financial support, it's been important to collect feedback from students about how we're doing. This chart shows data from the first two years, during which we asked a series of questions related to the quality and ease of use of the course materials compared to traditional resources. 93% of our students said the alternative resources were the same or better quality and the same or easier to use than traditional resources.

“The textbook given to us this semester was absolutely amazing. It gave all the information we needed very clearly and made it interesting to learn with the modern examples and cool extra facts about France obtaining to our lesson.”

“Madame Soueid is awesome and she wrote a really engaging and fun french book!”

“The book provided for the course was very helpful and well written. Because it was very specific for the class, the book was extremely useful.”

We've also given students open-ended options to share feedback with us, and they've made it clear they are very pleased with the program and encourage us to grow the use of OER in every discipline. Other feedback shows great appreciation for access options (print, PDF, web-based, etc.), which gives them agency in selecting the format that best meets their needs. Customization of content by the professor also consistency receives high praise, benefiting students by saving them time and helping them study more efficiently.

We've seen a stark contrast in how students talk about OER and how they talk about commercial resources.

“Very great resources and relevant to course. Low cost materials helped focus more on learning rather than worrying about how to pay for the education coming from different resources that may cost money, which helped the grade overall.”

“I am very delighted that UTA is moving towards free or reduced-cost textbooks that are online. I am a low-income student and these resources help me greatly.”

“Among her findings, students with loans had a more positive perception of the OER, and in this particular course, students using this OER did better than students who had used a traditional textbook in her same course the prior semester.”

Additional student feedback on both OER and traditional commercial materials can be found in the UTA ResearchCommons in “[Introduction to OER](#)” by Michelle Reed.

In their final reports, we also encourage our UTA CARES grantees to discuss the impact on student success metrics, such as course grades.

Moving Forward

- Formalizing policies & processes
- Strategic planning with campus partners
- Big investments
- Re-evaluating royalties & conflict of interest

Sources

- Photos by Michelle Reed: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/oelib/>
- UTA CARES home: <https://libguides.uta.edu/utacares/home>
- UTA Textbook Heroes: <https://libguides.uta.edu/utacares/heroes>
- Open for UTA Students: <https://libguides.uta.edu/students>
- The Semester You Learn to Walk (student blog post): <https://library.uta.edu/scholcomm/blog/Abdala>
- Mavs Open Press Pressbooks home: <https://uta.pressbooks.pub/>
- UTA ResearchCommons OER Collection: <https://rc.library.uta.edu/uta-ir/handle/10106/27084>
- Digital Access Codes Spark a Bookstore Debate: http://www.theshorthorn.com/news/digital-access-codes-spark-a-bookstore-debate/article_87b838be-4a76-11e8-9d76-e31249915b9a.html
- UTA Kicks Off OER Program with Eight Books in Development: <https://pressbooks.com/2018/08/30/university-of-texas-at-arlington-kicks-off-oer-program-with-eight-books-in-development/>
- Slide 5 text adapted from Steel Wagstaff https://drive.google.com/file/d/16kr-Bz_myQMd61YTtO8GOxUPBrzrk6xR/view
- Disability Symbols image is in the public domain: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Disability_symbols.png
- Slide 7 “Time Is Money” by Tax Credits via Flickr is licensed CC BY <https://www.flickr.com/photos/76657755@N04/7214596024>
- OASIS Source screenshot: <https://oasis.geneseo.edu/sources.php>
- Additional feedback from student surveys can be found in “Introduction to OER” by Michelle Reed: <http://hdl.handle.net/10106/27848>