

UTA CARES Grant Program Final Report: Content-Based French Language OER Creation Project

Submitted to: [Michelle Reed, Open Education Librarian, University of Texas at Arlington](#)

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Motivation

In 2010, CIA director Leon Panetta described foreign language proficiency as “crucial to CIA’s mission” (CIA Director). The career and internships page of the Central Intelligence Agency likewise indicates that language professionals assist the CIA in gathering “the intelligence that keeps our nation safe” (Careers). Unfortunately, as public universities increasingly see higher enrollments in STEM programs and lower enrollments in liberal arts courses, a dichotomy has developed that distinguishes the sciences from the humanities, treating them as separate, and unrelated, entities. This de facto amputation of liberal arts from STEM curriculum, and vice-versa, occurs at a time when multicultural and multilingual competencies are essential to flourish in a global economy and even to maintain our national security.

Given the consequential role of foreign language proficiency and multicultural competencies in global business and even national defense, language departments must play their part in attempting to bridge the growing STEM/Humanities gap. Indeed, the Modern Language Association, in its landmark 2007 report titled “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World,” called for a restructuring of university language programs, challenging language departments to broaden the range of topics and domains addressed in upper-level language classes and to introduce this new content at lower levels (Geisler 236-7).

In response to the MLA’s appeal and in an attempt to encourage and establish connections between the Humanities and STEM fields, a primary motivation behind this project was the desire to create a language textbook that stimulates critical thinking and promotes student engagement with topics and domains not traditionally covered in lower-level language classes. More specifically, the aim of this project was to create an intermediate French OER textbook drawing from multiple domains, without requiring costly textbook expenditures for students.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this project with regard to curriculum development and the financial situation of students were the following:

- To create an OER textbook featuring interdisciplinary content consistent with current methods of foreign language pedagogy for use in fourth-semester French classes
- To publish the textbook in PDF format and to make it available to students for free
- To make an optional print copy available to students at an affordable price through the UTA bookstore

Content Creation

Initial work on the project began even prior to the May 2017 grant proposal submission. In fact, a single page from the first draft was completed and submitted as part of the grant proposal itself. This page demonstrated the author’s intention to introduce themes tied to science and health in the first chapter. The first chapter, which was completed August 1, 2017, explored traditional and modern professions; the human body; medicine and medical professionals; illness and treatment; and the human immune system. Thanks to OER accessibility training provided by the UTA Library, this chapter was written in Word but incorporated section headings, functional bookmark links, alt text on images, and large font sizes that could be zoomed to 300% or more. Tables were structured so as to avoid merged and split cells, as well.

Les connaissances et le savoir

A. Œuvres des scientifiques. À tour de rôle, choisissez un(e) scientifique dans la liste, et demandez à votre camarade s'il connaît son œuvre. Répondez selon le modèle.

Tu connais l'œuvre de Marie Curie? ✓ *Un peu. Marie Curie est une chimiste franco-polonaise.*
X *Non, je ne connais pas son œuvre. C'est qui, Marie Curie?*

Charles Darwin	astronome	allemand
Albert Einstein	biologiste	américain
Jane Goodall	chimiste	anglais
Stephen Hawking	naturaliste	britannique
Antoine Lavoisier	linguiste	canadien
Steven Pinker	physicien (théoricien)	français
Neil deGrasse Tyson	primatologue	



Antoine Lavoisier : père de la chimie moderne en 1801

{{PD-1923}}

Le présent : *connaître, savoir*

connaître – to know, be familiar with		savoir – to know (facts), to know how	
je connais	nous connaissons	je sais	nous savons
tu connais	vous connaissez	tu sais	vous savez
il/elle/on connaît	ils/elles connaissent	il/elle/on sait	ils/elles savent

B. Organisations à but lucratif? Écrivez la forme appropriée du verbe entre parenthèses.

- Vous _____ (connaître) l'Institut Pasteur ?
- Oui, on _____ (savoir) que Louis Pasteur a créé l'Institut en 1887.
- Tes sœurs _____ (connaître) la société L'Oréal ?
- Oui, elles _____ (savoir) quels sont leurs meilleurs produits L'Oréal.
- Léo _____ (connaître) Citroën ?
- Oui, il _____ (savoir) entretenir une 2CV.
- Et toi, tu _____ (connaître) Michelin ?
- Oui, bien sûr ! Et je _____ (savoir) comment s'appelle la mascotte de Michelin ; il s'appelle Bibendum !



Michelin publie une collection de guides de tourisme disponibles en version papier ou numérique

P'tit défi! Connaissez-vous l'Institut Pasteur, Michelin, L'Oréal et Citroën ? Vous savez quel organisme est à but *non-lucratif* ?

œuvre – work(s); à but lucratif – for-profit; à but non lucratif – non-profit; entretenir – to maintain; disponible – available

Figure 1 - An early draft of a page from Ch.1

Work on the second and third chapters continued throughout the fall semester. Second chapter themes included agricultural and business topics such as the cultivation of wine grapes, maple trees, and plants for the fragrance industry; perfume and maple syrup production; grape varieties; the French wine classification system; weather and climate; and packaging and advertising. The third and final chapter focused on human relationships and travel, exploring topics such as marriage, weddings, means of transportation, vacations, and leisure activities.

Proofreading and Editing

As each chapter was completed, it was submitted to various colleagues, including Najia Alameddin, Blake Carpenter, and Brooke Cunningham-Koss, and finally to a native French speaker, Caroline Boutelant, for proofreading. Caroline was paid for her services and proofread all three chapters, while the others volunteered their efforts and proofread a single or part of a single chapter. All four made suggestions that were incorporated into the final text and were therefore listed as contributors to the finished work.

Images

Even before the author's grant proposal was accepted, the author began taking photos to be used in the textbook. Although the grant did not cover travel, a scheduled trip to Paris as part of a departmental study abroad program coincided with the acceptance of the grant proposal. Therefore, the author was able to take photographs relating to chapter themes, such as Figures 2 and 3, during her stay there. She used these and other photos taken during in France and Quebec in the textbook. These photos are covered by the same Creative Commons 4.0 International Attribution (CC By) License as the textbook itself.



Figure 2 Pastries from a Parisian bakery



Figure 3 Prosthetic hand designed by Ambroise Paré

In addition to photographs, a large number of public domain images were used. Finally, the author also created original images such as Figures 4 and 5, and modified public domain images such as the one in Figure 6, using GIMP, a free, open-sourced image editing software.



Figure 2 Parts of the human body;
Labels added to author photo

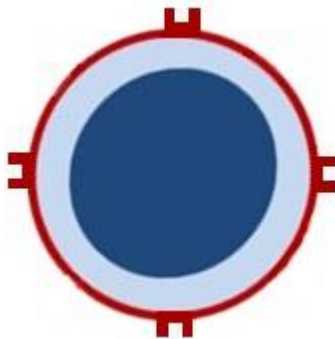


Figure 4 T cell
An author-created image

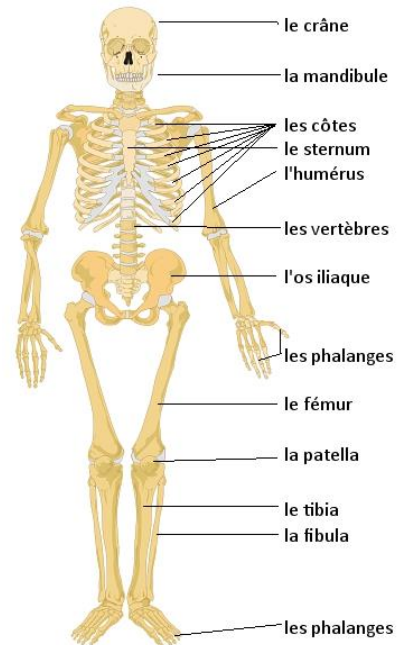


Figure 3 Bones of the human skeleton;
Labels added to public domain image

Challenges

The creation of a new OER textbook presented multiple challenges. One challenge was creating a textbook that would dovetail with the content taught in the previous semester so that students would be prepared for and simultaneously challenged by the new content. Other challenges, such as creating a resource that is accessible to students with disabilities and verifying the copyright status of images to be used in the publication, related more directly to open education considerations. Support and assistance provided by the University of Texas at Arlington Library staff were instrumental in overcoming these challenges.

Support and Assistance

The UTA Library staff provided training on topics such as open educational resource development and creation, creative commons licenses, accessibility, and copyright law. The Director of Open Educational Resources, Michelle Reed, conducted initial conference calls, organized training sessions over accessibility for UTA Cares grantees, and provided links to multiple OER resources, including the UTA CARES Grant Program website. Former Director of Publishing Jody Bailey provided detailed information on image copyright law and searching for public domain and CC licensed images. The Library staff also arranged a presentation by Dr. David Wiley of Lumen Learning on the advantages of OER use and the challenges of OER creation. Grantees were also expected to file a monthly report with Ms. Reed during the OER creation period. The assistance and guidance provided by UTA Library staff proved to be invaluable to the development and completion of this project.

Implementation

The first of three chapters was completed in the summer of 2017, and initial proofreading was conducted prior to the 2017-2018 academic year. Therefore, the partially completed OER resource was selected as the textbook for spring 2018, and students enrolled in French 2314 that semester were given access to the first chapter in PDF format while creation of the two remaining chapters continued. As subsequent chapters were completed, they were also made available in PDF format with the caveat that the textbook was still undergoing revisions and was not in its final form. Chapters continued to be provided in PDF format to French 2314 students in subsequent semesters. A print version was made available after publication was finalized.

Publication

The OER resource was published as *Tout un Monde: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Intermediate French*, and print copies were sold through the University of Texas at Arlington bookstore. Beginning in fall 2019, French 2314 students had the choice between downloading the book as a PDF or purchasing a print copy for \$17.75.

Impact

The financial impact to French 2314 students was significant. In the absence of this new OER resource, French 2314 students would have been required to purchase an intermediate French textbook. Stand-alone versions of intermediate-level textbooks that were available at the time

of the OER creation cost upwards of \$112, per their websites. Textbooks that were considered as alternatives included:

<i>Bien vu, bien dit: Intermediate French</i> , 1st ed.	McGraw-Hill	\$112.36
<i>Ensemble: Culture et Société</i> , 6th ed.	Wiley	\$114.95
<i>Pause-café : French in Review</i>	McGraw-Hill	\$117.82
<i>Réseau: Communication, Intégration, Intersections</i> , 2nd ed.	Pearson	\$118.67

Given savings of approximately \$112 per student enrolled in face-to-face sections of French 2314 during the spring 2018, fall 2018, and spring 2019 semesters and average savings of \$100 (based on the fact that some, but not all, students chose to purchase the print copy of the OER textbook for \$17.75) in fall 2019 and spring 2020, the total financial impact thus far can be calculated as follows:

<u>Semester</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Savings to Date</u>
Spring 2018	24 students	\$ 2,688
Fall 2018	26 students	\$ 2,912
Spring 2019	48 students	\$ 5,376
Fall 2019	10 students	\$ 1,000
Spring 2020	7 students	<u>\$ 700</u>
Total		\$12,676

Therefore, the financial impact of this project has been over \$12,000 in student savings thus far, and savings in future semesters will continue to accumulate.

An additional impact is the fact that students were able to access the OER textbook from the first day of class, which undoubtedly fostered student success when compared to previous semesters when a certain percentage of students were unable to afford, and hence unable to access, the textbook until two or three weeks into the semester. Offering the textbook as a free, downloadable document meant that 100% of students were able to begin using the textbook in class and at home immediately.

Feedback

Each semester of the OER implementation, feedback surveys were distributed to students who used the textbook. The survey results have been overwhelmingly positive. Results from the first semester of implementation, spring 2018, were as follows:

- Comparisons to traditional materials: Search capabilities
- 10% About the same
 - 20% Somewhat better
 - 70% Much better

Comparisons to traditional materials: High Quality Visuals

- 10% Somewhat better
- 90% Much better

Comparisons to traditional materials: Engaging & interesting content

- 20% Somewhat better
- 80% Much better

Comparisons to traditional materials: Clearness

- 20% About the same
- 20% Somewhat better
- 60% Much better

Comparisons to traditional materials: Study aids

- 10% About the same
- 20% Somewhat better
- 70% Much better

Comparisons to traditional materials: Relevance

- 10% Somewhat better
- 90% Much better

Comparisons to traditional materials: Up-to-date content

- 10% About the same
- 10% Somewhat better
- 80% Much better

Comparisons to traditional materials: Comfort

- 10% Somewhat worse
- 40% Somewhat better
- 50% Much better

Comparisons to traditional materials: Value

- 90% Much better
- 10% N/A

Comparisons to traditional materials: Access materials

- 10% About the same
- 20% Somewhat easier
- 70% Much easier

Comparisons to traditional materials: Find & start assignments

- 10% About the same
- 30% Somewhat easier
- 60% Much easier

Comparisons to traditional materials: Understand materials

- 10% About the same
- 20% Somewhat easier
- 70% Much easier

Comparisons to traditional materials: Shut out distractions

- 10% Somewhat harder
- 60% About the same
- 30% Much easier

Comparisons to traditional materials: Take useful notes over materials

- 10% About the same
- 20% Somewhat easier
- 70% Much easier

Comparisons to traditional materials: Complete assignments on time

- 20% About the same
- 20% Somewhat easier
- 50% Much easier

Comparisons to traditional materials: Review and remember material

- 20% About the same
- 30% Somewhat easier
- 50% Much easier

Comparisons to traditional materials: Prepare for discussions

- 40% Somewhat easier
- 60% Much easier

Comparisons to traditional materials: Collaborate with classmates

- 50% About the same
- 10% Somewhat easier
- 40% Much easier

Preferred format for course textbooks:

- 40% Print book
- 70% E-book

Preferred course:

- 80% Course with free digital materials
- 20% No preference

Comments in subsequent semesters continued to be positive with the majority of students ranking the quality of the educational resources and the ease of access to resources as “better than” the quality of and ease of access to educational resources in their other courses.

Survey respondent comments from various semesters described the textbook as “a great tool for the course,” “one of the better ones I’ve had,” “well written and relevant,” “engaging and understandable,” “helpful and well written” and “absolutely amazing.” One respondent commented that the textbook “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,” while another respondent asked that professors “make everything free and easily accessible.” Another respondent indicated that they were “thoroughly pleased with this experience.”

Future Plans

One important step that I have been unable to accomplish thus far is the publication of an online version of this OER textbook in PressBooks. I plan to work on a PressBooks version beginning in the summer of 2020.

Reflections

As the author of this OER textbook, I can confirm that the process of developing an OER has been more frustrating and time-consuming than I first anticipated but that I am nevertheless pleased with the resulting textbook and plan to use it for years to come.

One of the most difficult aspects of the project was creating an OER textbook that meets accessibility requirements. Thanks to training provided early on by Library staff, I learned how to increase accessibility by using headings, eliminating or simplifying tables, and adding alt text to images. I worked tirelessly to employ these tools and was therefore disappointed when I was informed that my textbook did not meet accessibility standards. I had been expecting that upon completion of the textbook, someone would work with me one-on-one to fix any remaining accessibility issues. Instead, I received a report stating I had failed 4 of 8 accessibility standards. Some of these, such as the failure to develop of a Table of Contents, were easily addressed and corrected. Others, such as the use of alt text on non-decorative images, were frustrating because I had endeavored to fulfill the standard to the best of my ability. With regard to images standards, a list of which images on which pages did not contain alt text would have been helpful than a failing grade with no detail. Other requirements such as the inclusion of an accessibility statement were frustrating because this was the first I had ever heard that such a requirement was necessary. Being told that we would proceed with an online version instead of the PDF version I had invested so much time was even more disconcerting. And although I now see the value of creating an online version in addition to the PDF, I wish the process had been explained in more detail from the beginning.

Another aspect that was challenging was the fact that the grant is administered in two payments, one at the beginning of the project and another upon completion of the project and

submission of the final report. I found that after completion of the textbook and its implementation in the classroom for a couple of semesters, I felt motivated to make certain changes. However, since funds are cleared from departmental budgets at the end of every summer, there were no remaining funds left from the first payment and there was no access allowed to funds from the final payment at that point in the process. Had I had access to funds in the second year of implementation, I would have hired a second native speaker to proofread the changes I made to the textbook after two semesters of implementation. For this reason, I recommend dividing the grant funds into three payments instead of two.

In addition to being asked to provide monthly reports, I would recommend requiring the OER creator to meet with an OER specialist once every six months to make sure the project is on track. Meeting one-on-one to tactfully verify that requirements are being met, to provide feedback and specific training to address any shortcomings, and to make sure that the creator does not feel he or she has invested months of work into something that may be deemed insufficient or substandard will benefit both the creator and the UTA CARES Grant administrators in the long run.

Despite these frustrations and feelings of incompleteness due to the fact that I have not yet developed a PressBooks version of the OER, the feedback from my students has been extremely positive. Knowing that I have created something they find intriguing and that I have saved students thousands of dollars has made this project something I am indeed proud of. I am also proud of the skills I have developed and will put them to good use in developing content for courses in the future. As a result, I am more than happy to encourage others to apply for a UTA CARES Grant in order to apply for the funds and support needed to create and adopt more open educational resources for our students.

References

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Geisler, Michael, et al. "Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World: MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages." *Profession*, 2007, pp. 234–245. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25595871.

Image and Photo Credits

Figure 1: Early draft of what would become page 5 of *Tout un monde : An Interdisciplinary Approach to Intermediate French*. Soueid, Alicia. Arlington, TX: Mavs Open Press, 2019. Images on page include: Antoine-Laurent de Lavoisier, public domain via Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lavoisier.jpg>. Photo of Michelin guide books by Alicia Soueid, public domain.

Figure 2: Photo taken in Paris, France by Alicia Soueid, public domain.

Figure 3: Photo taken at the Musée d'histoire de la médecine, Paris, France by Alicia Soueid, public domain.

Figure 4: Photo of statue at the Palais de la Berbie in Albi, France, with French labels, both by Alicia Soueid, public domain.

Figure 5: Image by Alicia Soueid, public domain.

Figure 6: Human skeleton front – no labels, public domain via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Human_skeleton_front_-_no_labels.svg, with French labels by Alicia Soueid, public domain.