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A Tale of Two Campuses: Local and global approaches to reducing textbook costs

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Textbooks On Reserve (TOR) Initiative

In spring 2013 the UNH Manchester Library implemented a textbook program whereby selected required texts for introductory courses were acquired and placed on reserve for student use. A small book budget line was established (\$2k per year) and faculty donations were encouraged. Although it was not possible to make every required textbook available to students through this program, this simple, low-cost approach supported most first-year introductory courses and was met with enthusiasm by students in these courses.

Program Impact

A review of circulation figures for the 3+ years of operation reflect a continued growth in usage (increase of 200% from implementation to present).

When the TOR program began in spring 2013, an allocation of \$2K from the overall book budget was designated for textbook purchase annually. The chart below describes a breakdown by semester of library purchases versus faculty donations. Total expenditures to date equals \$8,236.

Semester	New Purchase	Library Owned	Faculty Provided	Total on Reserve
Spring 2013	10	n/a	15	25
Fall 2013	10	7	12	29
Spring 2014	2	12	8	22
Fall 2014	11	14	9	34
Spring 2015	3	14	5	22
Fall 2015	10	19	11	40
Spring 2016	3	25	9	37
Fall 2016	7	17	9	33

Survey Results

An informal survey administered during spring 2016 semester confirmed that the majority of respondents (92%) were aware of the TOR program.

Students provided the following reasons for using the service:

- Textbooks costs are too high
- Textbook purchased but did not arrive on time
- Textbooks too heavy to carry around campus

Future and Ongoing Plans

- Increase promotional efforts by partnering with Admissions and Student Development teams to increase student awareness
- Identify opportunities to expand the collection beyond introductory texts
- Incorporate Manchester campus librarians within the OER initiative

Two UNH Campuses

Manchester campus serves a commuter population of 1050+ students that is largely non-traditional aged, requiring students to balance fulltime studies with employment, families, and military commitments.

Durham campus serves a largely residential traditional aged population. The campus offers more than 200 degree programs to 13,000 undergraduate and 2,000 graduate students from 70 countries.

Call to Action

Campus community conversations in student government forums and Diversity & Inclusive Excellence Committees challenged librarians to respond with alternative approaches to mitigate the rising costs of textbooks. Issues of access and affordability highlighted the urgency to implement meaningful change quickly.

UNH Librarians' Response

Academic librarians explored a variety of strategies to meet the need for more affordable and convenient access to required textbooks and other course materials. It was clear that “one size does not fit all.”

At the University of New Hampshire, two approaches are making an impact:

- the implementation of a Textbooks-on-Reserve (TOR) program at the commuter campus giving students access to introductory courses texts across the disciplines and
- the creation of an Open Educational Resources (OER) initiative at the residential campus designed to address concerns across the entire institution. While organized from the Durham campus, the initiative included Manchester faculty and, in Year Two, a Manchester librarian and instructional designer.

In developing these approaches, librarians partnered with key campus stakeholders and service providers, thereby addressing both immediate needs and laying the foundation for expansion of OER integration across curricula.

Open Educational Resources (OER) Initiative, Year One

In spring 2015 the University of New Hampshire Library, Academic Technology, and Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning launched a pilot initiative to encourage faculty adoption of Open Educational Resources. Nine “OER Ambassadors” were selected to engage with OER in a course and share that experience with the UNH community. Each OER Ambassador received a grant of \$3000 to support work over the summer. Funding for the pilot was provided by the Provost’s Office, Schools and Colleges, Library, and Academic Technology.

Support Teams and Brainshops

OER Ambassadors were assigned a Support Team that included an instructional designer, librarian, and assessment expert. The team assisted with course design, locating and evaluating OER, technical and copyright issues, and implementing an assessment plan. Ambassadors and Support Team members met as a group over the summer and into the fall to discuss plans, ideas, and challenges. These meetings have become the foundation for a community of practice around Open Education at UNH.

Pilot Evaluation Criteria

- Savings realized by students
- Student learning outcomes comparable to or better than previous outcomes
- Faculty success in identifying and incorporating OER materials
- Faculty satisfaction with support and services
- Student satisfaction with the course materials

Outcomes

Test scores in OER courses have been comparable to or better than those in previous years. Faculty felt the effort worthwhile and indicated they would continue to use OER. Students had a favorable perception of cost savings, usability of materials, and exam preparation.

Year Two and Beyond

In 2016/2017 we supported 15 UNH OER Ambassadors with a three-day workshop and \$2000 summer grant. The workshop, funded by a University System of New Hampshire Grant, included colleagues from Granite State College, Keene State College, and Plymouth State University. Assessment data is being analyzed now and will be available on the project website in April: <https://www.unh.edu/it/oer>. Planning for Year Three is underway.

Estimated student savings in Year One:
\$149,319