

TOPkit DIGEST

This month's TOPkit Digest is brought to you by [Lily Dubach](mailto:Lily@ucf.edu), MSI (Lily@ucf.edu). Lily is the Textbook Affordability Librarian in [UCF Libraries](#) at the [University of Central Florida](#). She discusses the topic of

Textbook Affordability

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Video Tip

Open Source Textbooks Save Students \$1 Billion

OpenStax and OER's Impact on Access and Learning



This video shows that making textbooks free as Open Educational Resources (OER) can save students, collectively, an incredible amount of money--estimated to surpass \$1 billion from [OpenStax](#) alone. Beyond the savings, however, are considerations for how students learn. OER provide a space to design digestible, accessible, and effective learning objects. As a movement, [Open Education](#) and those involved in creating materials and initiatives are helping students achieve academic success.

[Watch Video](#)

Top Tips

Developing a Textbook Affordability Program

Collaborating to Support Open Educational Resources and Library-Sourced eBooks as Course Materials

[Textbooks are expensive](#) and [above the inflation rate](#). When students cannot afford to purchase course materials, this [can negatively impact their academic success](#). The textbook cost crisis has led to local, national, and international efforts to address affordability. Locally, the [2022 Florida Statute 1004.085](#) requires state colleges and universities to minimize costs and increase transparency about course material adoptions, including the encouraged use of [Open Educational Resources \(OER\)](#). Nationally, [numerous states are adopting OER policies](#) and the United States renewed the [Open Textbook Pilot Grant](#) in 2022. Globally, [UNESCO has a mandate in OER](#) and the annual [Open Education Conference](#) reaches an international audience.

OER provide effective solutions for textbook affordability and enhance learning and promote collaboration among various experts, including but not limited to instructional designers, faculty developers, librarians, and instructors. These collaborations can help address textbook affordability beyond OER alone,

including other methods such as using library-sourced eBooks, textbook rental or discount programs, and course reserves. By combining different options and involving campus experts, institutions can establish a more comprehensive program to help your faculty save students money.



...the [2022 Florida Statute 1004.085](#) requires state colleges and universities to minimize costs and increase transparency about course material adoptions, including the encouraged use of [Open Educational Resources \(OER\)](#).

Tip #1: Address the Challenges and Opportunities. As you consider your institution, do an environmental scan. Even without a recognized affordability initiative, there are likely people and departments already doing the work, leading to connections and opportunities for your faculty to offer open or affordable resources to their students. While [barriers](#) or challenges may arise, strive to remain aware of any relevant policies, regulations, contracts (especially with the bookstore), or an [inclusive access program](#). Keep an open mind and explore all options, as there may be unexpected opportunities, as with the example from the University of Central Florida's [bookstore purchase platform including a note](#) when some material has a free option.

Tip #2: Focus on Aligning Your Team, Goals, Communication, and Workflow. The smallest initiative could be led by one person, often a librarian or instructional designer, whereas a large team can include perspectives and expertise across many campus units. At the University of Central Florida, the [Affordable Instructional Materials Initiative \(AIM\)](#) includes partners in the [Division of Digital Learning](#), [Libraries](#), [Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning](#), [Bookstore](#), [Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs](#), and others. As you form and maintain your team, use a central goal, such as textbook affordability or open education, to align subgoals and projects. Schedule regular meetings, choose functional communication methods, and develop logical workflows. All the while, encourage unity and momentum, such as through exciting events or team-building retreats that involve participation from all members. Consider expanding your net of support to include advisors and other ways to receive input and ideas from instructors, [students](#), and other important perspectives.

Tip #3: Facilitate Opportunities for Instructors to Adopt, Adapt, or Author OER. First, help instructors find and adopt OER that already exist. Many websites provide search interfaces or storage for OER, some being [The Mason OER Metafinder](#), [OASIS](#), [Pressbooks Directory](#), [OER Commons](#), [MERLOT](#), [Open Textbook Library](#), [LibreTexts](#), [BC Campus](#), and [OpenStax](#). The process to edit or create OER is more complex and functions effectively when there are robust sources of expertise and support, such as skills and knowledge related to the subject matter itself, databases and investigation, instructional design, software or technical tools, graphic design and multimedia, accessibility, copyright compliance, marketing and communication, project management, and so on. Beyond the expertise, consider how to provide monetary support or incentives, and see some examples from the [University of North Florida](#), [Florida State University](#), [Michigan State University](#), and

[Oregon State University](#).

Tip #4: Offer Additional Free-to-Student Options with Library-Sourced eBooks.

Sometimes OER are unavailable for specific topic areas, or your faculty lack time to create or adapt their own. [Library-sourced eBooks can help fill this gap](#) if the appropriate licenses are available and fit within the library budget. Librarians would purchase eBooks that, ideally, provide DRM-free ([digital rights management](#)) PDFs and, minimally, unlimited simultaneous user access. These two aspects allow students to retain the PDFs and for all students in a course to simultaneously access the eBook. Sometimes an instructor's already-adopted textbook is available as an eBook through the library, making this an efficient process to promote textbook affordability. This initiative does not have to be a librarian-only effort: other team members can assist by helping to build automated processes to compare textbook adoption lists against library catalogs, or by providing information to instructors on library options. The library can also help textbook affordability through course reserves or [controlled digital lending](#).

Tip #5: Raise Awareness about Free Course Material Options. Not only do faculty need to know about free course material options but students should be informed which classes have zero textbook costs. Introduce your instructors through orientations, workshops, and developmental program communications. The University of Central Florida provides information on [how faculty can inform students](#) about the free materials. One of the main methods is through the [eTextbook Portal](#) that allows students and instructors to search for their required textbook and, if the library provides the eBook or links to the OER, it can be listed. Other institutions have eTextbook/eBook/OER search interfaces, including [Louisiana State University](#), [University of South Florida](#), and [Florida State University](#). Institutions should also display indicators in the bookstore textbook search and the class enrollment platform with a [Zero Textbook Cost Course Indicator](#).

Tip #6: Display Savings and Recognition Achieved. There are different ways to calculate potential student savings, and it is important for your team to agree on the methodology. Institutions may decide to use the cost of the previous textbook, the bookstore's purchase price, a flat \$100 per student per course, or a researched estimate such as [SPARC's calculation](#). Once calculated, display or communicate the results strategically and have a way to recognize instructors and collaborators. The [AIM High Event at the University of Central Florida](#) awards teams and individuals as well as provides recognition to all involved in [Affordable Instructional Materials \(AIM\)](#) efforts. This is aided by Florida's [Affordability Counts](#) system, which is another way to provide recognition to instructors.

From the Community

The OER Starter Kit

Comprehensive Guide to Building and Managing an OER Program

This openly licensed book, "[The OER Starter Kit for Program Managers](#)" is a comprehensive guide on how to build and manage your own OER program. With 22 chapters and 8 case studies covering

topics from building your team to reporting student savings, it provides everything needed to know to make a successful OER program.

Would you like to share your expertise with the TOPkit community as a TOPkit Digest contributor? Reach out to us with your topic idea at TOPkit@ucf.edu.

New TOPkit Content

Getting Published in the Field of Instructional Design and Technology and Faculty Development

Start-to-Finish Steps Toward Publishing

Instructional design and online faculty development are expansive areas of research and publication, with many options for publishing findings and recommendations. Wyatt's and Miller's "Getting Published in the Field of Instructional Design and Technology and Faculty Development" suggests steps from start to finish toward publishing experience-driven and outcomes-driven articles that can make impactful contributions to the growing body of literature in the field.

Would you like to share your knowledge about [planning](#), [developing](#), or [evaluating](#) with the TOPkit community? [Submit your idea](#) →

Top Community Topics



- [Evaluating - Checklists & Rubrics](#)
- [Developing - Sample Course](#)
- [Planning - Faculty Development Decision Guide](#)
- [Developing - Best Practices for Using Video in Online Learning](#)
- [TOPkit Digest](#)
- [Ask ADDIE](#)
- [Developing - Plan an Online Community of Inquiry](#)

Works Referenced or Cited

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