Open Education

What is Open Education?

Open Education encompasses resources, tools and practices that are free of legal, financial and technical barriers and can be fully used, shared and adapted in the digital environment. Open Education maximizes the power of the Internet to make education more affordable, accessible and effective.

What are Open Educational Resources (OER)?

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning, and research resources released under an open license that permits their free use and repurposing by others. OER can be textbooks, full courses, lesson plans, videos, tests, software, or any other tool, material, or technique that supports access to knowledge.

The Importance of OER: Key Data Points

Technology creates an unprecedented opportunity to expand access to knowledge. Yet, our systems for communicating knowledge still have many of the same cost barriers and use limitations present in the pre-Internet, print-based world. This is especially true for educational resources. The cost of college textbooks has risen rapidly, forcing many students to forgo required materials due to the expense. Digital alternatives have offered little financial relief and are typically sold on a subscription basis with heavy restrictions on access. Moreover, traditional publishing systems too often discourage, rather than enable, the adaptation or improvement of content for the classroom.
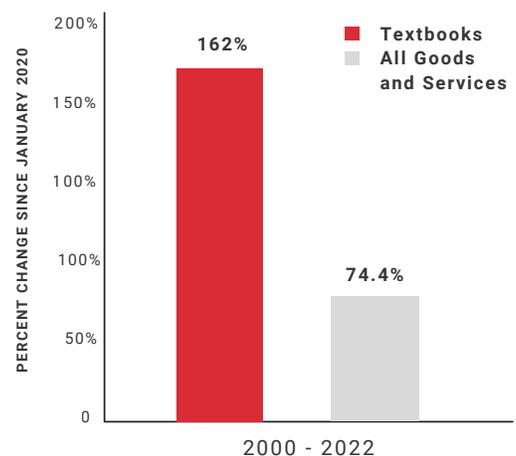
Educational materials are both an important output of the scholarly research process and, in turn, an essential part of educating tomorrow's scholars. SPARC believes that OER are the ideal model to leverage the digital environment to unlock the full potential for education.

64.2%
OF STUDENTS

did not purchase a required textbook because of the high cost [1].

From January 2000 to June 2022, the cost of textbooks increased by 162%, much faster than the average inflation rate of 74.4% over that time [2].

The Scholarly Publishing & Academic Resources Coalition
2001 L Street N.W., Suite 500, PMB 2096
Washington, DC 20036
Email: sparc@sparcopen.org
Web: www.sparcopen.org

SPARC✳

How are OER Created?

OER publishing efforts mirror traditional publishing process, including author compensation and peer review, and release the output under an open license.

OpenCourseWare are OER created by educators and presented in course format which can include course planning materials and instructional materials.

Publicly-funded initiatives support the development of OER and ensure that taxpayer-funded educational resources are openly licensed.

Individual authors who receive support from their institution or write on their own time can share their work freely through OER repositories.

How are OER Used?

Students can access OERs online for zero cost, download and keep a digital copy, and print or purchase a low-cost hardcopy.

Educators can curate, tailor, and share OERs to perfectly suit their curriculum, and share their innovations freely.

Authors can disseminate their work to a worldwide audience while still receiving attribution.

Institutions can leverage OERs to reduce student out-of-pocket costs.

Entrepreneurs can build businesses around OER by offering value-added products.

How Can You Support Open Education?

SPARC supports the creation and adoption of OER to be used in teaching, along with collaborative new approaches to learning, where knowledge is created and shaped openly, and promotes practices and policies that advance this vision. You can help support OER by:

Increasing OER awareness and adoption. Students, professors, librarians, and administrators can help raise awareness, increase discoverability, and advocate adoption of OERs whenever appropriate.

Supporting OER development. Institutions, foundations, authors, and researchers can support or participate in frameworks for creating, vetting, and evaluating the efficacy of OER.

Advocating effective policies. Policymakers can fund programs that support OER creation and adoption, ensure that publicly-funded educational resources are openly licensed, and remove policy barriers that hinder OER.

[1]   Florida Virtual Campus. 2018 Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey: Results and Findings.
       https://dlss.flvc.org/documents/210036/1314923/2018+Student+Textbook+and+Course+Materials+Survey+Report+--+FINAL+VERSION+--
       +20190308.pdf/07478d85-89c2-3742-209a-9cc5df8cd7ea

[2]   Perry, M. 2022. Chart of the day...or century? American Enterprise Institute. https://www.aei.org/carpe-diem/chart-of-the-day-or-century-8

[3]   Senack, E. 2014. Fixing the broken textbook market: How students respond to high textbook costs and demand alternatives.
       http://uspirg.org/reports/usp/fixing-broken-textbook-market