

Can We Write Textbooks the Way We Write Scholarship?

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19 November 2010

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Webinar sponsored by

Open Access Textbooks: A FIPSE Grant Project

The Community College Open Textbook Collaborative

Teachers Don't Already Create Textbook Readings

Institutionally-mandated open courseware projects are not producing open textbooks. Unlike other open educational resources (OER), teachers don't already create textbook readings as part of their teaching lives.

Reasons Teachers Might Write Open Textbooks

- For pay (adaptation of commercial textbook model)
- Intrinsic rewards
- Disciplinary/Institutional reward and value systems

Intrinsic Rewards

- Reason many people have probably written open textbooks today
- Most teachers would agree that traditional commercial textbook publishing is a problem
- How to increase participation from those for whom the intrinsic rewards are not enough?

Tie to Existing Reward and Value Systems

- Academic field acceptance of OER development as work of the discipline
- Institutional recognition as publication that is either service, scholarship, or regular work of being a teacher

Open Textbook Publishing as Disciplinary Work

Reclaim the "outsourcing" of textbooks (and other course materials and even curriculum development) production that has been taken over by commercial publishers at high monetary cost to students.

Benefit: Disciplines will have a stronger role in shaping the textbooks used in education.

Problems with Valuing Open Textbook Production in Tenure and Promotion

- Genres of collaborating and publishing open textbooks via the web not understood/accepted
- Quality open textbook production must be seen as valued publication

We Can Write Open Textbooks Like We Write Scholarship!

- Tie to already valued peer review processes
- Publish in genres that tenure and review committees can recognize
- Use publishers that increase ethos of the project
- Build disciplinary acceptance of texts as evidence that the work should be valued at the institutional level

The WS Approach

[Writing Spaces](#) is a peer-reviewed anthology series of essays written for the first year writing classroom, each chapter written by teachers for students. Each volume is Creative Commons licensed, available in print (for fee) and on the web (for free), and is published by [Parlor Press](#), an independent academic press.

Easier for Teachers to Argue Value of Work

Writing Spaces' individually authored texts and more traditional proposal and peer review process gives authors a line on their CV with direct publication credit for their work.

The Opposite Author Base of Academic Publishing

- A majority of higher education institutions value teaching more than research.
- At such institutions, authors will be able to tie their WS publication credit to the importance of teaching and professional development.
- Teachers who do not have much time for conducting academic research have, instead, tremendous classroom experience.

Familiar to the Teacher-as-Author

- Teachers can better estimate what an anthologized essay submission will require of them, as opposed to wikis or other online collaborative textbook projects.
- Teachers are not put off by the technology required to author WS essays (.doc files)
- Teachers understand how to argue for a print publication in tenure and promotion review.

WS Proposal/Review/Editing Process Is Highly Collaborative

Peer review and editing as part of a publishing process do more than act as "gate keepers" to prevent poor quality; it *increases* the quality over OER that would have been self-published by an individual author and that has had only post-publication review.

WS Proposal Process

- Authors submit proposals, not full manuscripts.
- Four or more editors review proposals.
- Suitability of subject matter and value to the collection considered.
- An acceptance/proposal submission rate of approximately 50%.
- Editors provide some guidance in submitting a full manuscript for editorial board review.

WS Review Process

- Editorial board, similar to that of journal publishing, reviews each full manuscript.
- Two EB members produce a collaborative review offering feedback that evaluates both the validity and suitability of the content and the quality of the writing.
- Full manuscripts are never rejected by EB reviewers on the initial 1st review; given a chance, most teachers can revise to create good textbook materials with feedback.

WS Editing Post Review

- Editors sometimes ask for minor revisions to improve the student audience address before the text is remanded to copy editing.
- Each manuscript is collaboratively copy edited by two WS editors.
- Editors provide mechanical error correction and suggest manuscript changes for improving the student address (e. g., clarity of ideas and improvement in voice).

Benefits of the Essay Model

In addition to making an open textbook contribution a "manageable" prospect for individual authors, WS student-centered essays

- have a more reader-friendly voice
- are very modular for course integration
- provide unique perspectives of individual teachers
- avoid "tiring out" the student reader from hearing the same text voice

Problems with the Essay Genre

Teachers have difficulty writing for a student audience. Some authors make many rhetorical moves appropriate for scholarly writing or talking to other teachers that are not good for student readers. Our updated WS Author Guide now covers writing for student audiences:

<http://writingspaces.org/sites/default/files/ws-author-guide-fall-2010.pdf>

Long Term Goals for WS

Open textbooks are only the first step for WS:

Our mission is to grow an active community of teachers that improves student learning by creating, using, and promoting open educational resources for the writing classroom.

Lessons from CBPP

Drawing on the lessons of successful commons-based peer production (CBPP) projects such as Linux and Wikipedia, we believe that disciplinary community-based collaborative production is the path towards building a sustainable education commons, as opposed to simply sharing and reusing OER that teachers might choose to produce/use.

The Immediate Future

- Continue producing more volumes to build the online chapter database.
- Grow a community of teachers collaboratively constructing other curricular materials for first year writing courses.
- Build method for selling custom volumes for those that want print copies.
- Expand the digital formats offered (currently only PDF).

Questions for the Audience

- What do you see as the complications for this publication model in this discipline?
- What would be the pragmatic considerations for adopting this type of open textbook publication?
- What questions do you have about how to write essays for student readers?

Feel Free to Contact Us with Any Questions

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