CUNY IT Conference

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Conference Theme: Instructional/Information Technology in CUNY: The Catalyst for Transformational Change

The Online Textbook: A Student-Faculty Collaboration
Track 1 - Adopting, Adapting, and Authoring Digital Learning Resources

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Online textbooks are a student centered approach to the course textbook making text available anywhere and at anytime via computers including hand held devices. They contain the works of scholars and academics placed online under toll or open access. Some add the work of the instructor and the works of students in a single online textbook designed for students. For learners online textbooks are economically advantageous and convenient and can contain materials at a level that can be adjusted to that of the learner. For the instructor they can be easily revised following user feedback and can include student work. Sample listing of five such works now in use by the presenter at **http://www.ppecorino.com/BOOKS.html**

What is an online textbook?

There are a variety of entities that can be described as online textbooks and their number may grow larger.

1. Publisher supplied online version of a print textbook

2. Publisher supplied enhanced online version of print textbook

3-4. Publisher supplied textbook that exists only online and intended for downloading or exclusively online

5-6.Instructor edited textbook that exists only online and intended for downloading or exclusively online

7-8. Instructor authored textbook that exists only online and intended for downloading or exclusively online

9. Instructor and student authored textbook that exists only online and intended for downloading.

10. Instructor and student authored textbook that exists only online and intended for use exclusively online

11. Open Access Online books authored by an entire communities at wikibooks established in 2003.

Driving Forces

    a. High Cost of Published Texts
    b. Varied learning styles
    c. Varied academic preparation of learners
    d. Varied levels of learner's Reading Comprehension
    e. New Information and Knowledge
    f. New techniques for presentation
    g. Learner use of convenience technologies

Enabling Factors

    a. Internet
    b. Open Access Publication Paradigm
    c. Open Access Texts (Open Source) – online content
    d. Social Networking
    e. Lower cost of technology- vanishing "digital divides"
    f. Learner familiarity with technology
    g. Learner preferences for technology

There is a campaign **Make Textbooks Affordable** by Student Public Interest Research Groups to increase the number of such texts that has over 1,200 instructors endorsing its **Open Textbooks Statement of Intent**

As faculty members, we affirm that it is our prerogative and responsibility to select course materials that are pedagogically most appropriate for our classes. We also affirm that it is consistent with this principle to seek affordable and accessible course materials for our classes whenever possible. This includes "open textbooks," which are textbooks offered online to students at no cost.

Open textbooks and other open educational resources present an affordable, comparable and flexible alternative to commercial course materials:

- Open textbooks are available online at no cost to students, and they can be printed for a low cost in various formats. This ensures all students have equal access to the content, while still preserving the option to use a conventional textbook format.
- Open textbooks that are of comparable quality to commercial textbooks are already available. An example of an open textbook is Caltech Professor R. Preston McAfee's Introduction to Economic Analysis, which has been adopted at NYU and Harvard.
- Open textbooks are flexible. Instructors are free to use a particular edition indefinitely or customize content if desired.

Therefore, we the undersigned declare our intent to:

- Seek and consider open textbooks and other open educational resources when choosing course materials.
- Give preference to a low or no cost educational resource such as an open textbook over an expensive, commercial textbook if it best fits the needs of a class.
- Encourage institutions to develop support for the use of open textbooks and other open educational resources.

Recent News

A New York Times Editorial April 26, 2008 **"That Book Costs How Much?"** notes the economic concerns driving much of this trend and possible legislative actions intended to address the mounting costs of textbooks and then adds

> "Schools are beginning to balk at outrageous pricing. Rice University offers textbooks for some classes free online and charges a nominal fee for the printed version. A new company called Flat World Knowledge, based in Nyack, N.Y., plans to offer online textbooks free and hopes to make its profit by selling supplemental materials like study guides and hard copies printed on demand."

On April 29, 2008 the Chronicle of Higher Education printed "Community College Open-Textbook Project Gets Under Way"

> At the meeting, representatives of institutions around the country will start reviewing open-textbook models for "quality, usability, accessibility, and sustainability," according to a news release. They will initially review four providers of free online educational resources: **Connexions**, run by Rice University; **Flat World Knowledge**, a commercial digital-textbook publisher that will begin offering free textbooks online next year; the University of California's **UC College Prep Online**, which offers Advanced Placement and other courses online; and the **Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources**, which was founded by the Foothill-De Anza Community College District and the League for Innovation in the Community College.

The Wall Street Journal, July 10, 2008 carried the item **"As Textbooks Go 'Custom,' Students Pay"** indicating a variety of issues with regard to the increasing price of textbooks and efforts to deal with that and recent efforts to provide free alternatives and custom textbooks with payments going to instructors, departments and institutions.

USA Today , July 10, 2008, updates its article **"Online 'open textbooks' save students cash"**

Reporting on the growth in the variety and number of online textbooks. It reports that former executive at Pearson Education Publications

> " [Eric] Frank and his business partner, Jeff Shelstad, in January plan to launch Flat World Knowledge, the first commercial open textbook publisher. It will offer free online textbooks that can be printed and bound, for about $25 for black and white and $35-$39 for full-color copies. The average price of a traditional textbook varies by subject; many new textbooks cost about $150, Allen says. Instructors will be able to modify the content, and authors will be compensated "at least as well as the traditional model." Frank is recruiting authors, who will receive royalties for texts and supplementary materials such as study guides."

From the online version of Inside Higher Education on April 29, 2008 there is a report that with a grant from the William and Flora Hewlet foundation the Foothill-De Anza Community College District in California has a project to train instructors in the use of open resources with a goal to have them produce open access textbooks.

On July 10, 2008 the Society for University and College Planning reported in **Online 'Textbooks' See College Doors Opening**

We've been watching this trend for quite some time. It's now clearly in an exponential growth curve and could well be mainstream in less that a decade:

As textbook prices skyrocket, college students and faculty seeking more affordable options increasingly are turning to "open textbooks" as an alternative.

Open textbooks are free textbooks available online that are licensed to allow users to download, customize and print any part of the text. Professors can change content to fit their teaching styles. Some authors offer a print-on-demand service that produces professionally bound copies for $10 to $20.

Textbook prices have outpaced inflation 2-to-1 in the past two decades, says a 2005 report by the Government Accountability Office. They account for 26% of tuition and fees at four-year public universities and nearly three-quarters of costs at community colleges, the GAO says.

Listings for online textbooks

Textbook Revolution Textbook Revolution is the web's source for free educational materials.

Online Books Page   listing by the University of Pennsylvania

MERLOT   MERLOT is a leading edge, user-centered, searchable collection of peer reviewed and selected higher education, online learning materials, catalogued by registered members and a set of faculty development support services.

Project Gutenberg   There are over 25,000 free books in the Project Gutenberg

Questia   Questia is the first online library that provides 24/7 access to the world's largest online collection of books and journal articles in the humanities and social sciences, plus magazine and newspaper articles.

World Public Library   This collection hosts more than 500,000+ PDF eBooks and eDocuments.

Connexions   is an online repository of free educational content that uses a Creative Commons license (see www.creativecommons.org).

Assayor Links to full text versions of more than 1,000 titles in various subject areas.

Online Library of Liberty Contains full text of many books in economics, history, politics, music, art, and other subject areas.

Free Books 4 Doctors Includes links to the full text of more than 650 medical books.

Student Boook World Includes hundreds of textbooks in various subject areas.

Tech Books for Free Includes full textbooks in computer and technology subject areas.

Textbook Solutions Lower-cost textbooks available for download in a variety of subject areas.

Focus of this presentation

Example #10 of an online textbook: Instructor and student authored textbook that exists only online and intended for use exclusively online.

These textbooks are the result of faculty-student collaborations.

What is the **student-faculty collaboration**?

- Faculty organize and author text
- Students, users, readers supply critiques and suggestions
- Faculty accept critiques and make revisions
- Under faculty supervision and editing, students supply text

Examples of student supplied text:

1) A summary of an article:
Software Ownership and Natural Rights Volkman, R.
Summary by Kimberly Beuther (CUNY, 2006)

2) An article
Malpractice organized by Sara Cerrone (NCC, 2005)

3) Case Presentations
The Birth of Gene Therapy   prepared and written by Mark Riddagh (SCCC, 2006)

4) Reflections on important points;
Information Technologies and Accountability by Chris Murphy, CUNY, SPS, 2007

5) A presentation
Stages of Grief **by Nancy Weitman , CUNY, 2003**

My examples are available in my online textbooks at this location

Introduction to Philosophy. 2001
http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/SocialSciences/ppecorino/INTRO_TEXT/default.htm
Philosophy of Religion. 2002
http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/SocialSciences/ppecorino/PHIL_of_RELIGION_TEXT/default.htm
Perspectives on Death and Dying 2003
http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/SocialSciences/ppecorino/DeathandDying_TEXT/Default.htm
Ethics. with Stephen O'Sullivan 2002.
http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/SocialSciences/ppecorino/ETHICS_TEXT/default.htm
Medical Ethics. 2004
http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/SocialSciences/ppecorino/MEDICAL_ETHICS_TEXT/default.htm
Computers, Information Technologies, the Internet, Ethics, Society and Human Values 2006
http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/SocialSciences/ppecorino/CISESHV_TEXT/default.html

Pro's and Con's of using online textbooks for students and instructors

There may be some general observations of advantages and disadvantages common to all varieties of online textbooks (e.g., cheaper, user friendly, etc…) but as the range of such works is so great (e.g., online only and downloadable) those observations are likely to be less than useful. Any valued listing would need to be related to the particular variety of online textbook being discussed of the eleven different types listed above. There are such observations as the listing of **30 Benefits of Ebooks** by Michael Pastore available.   There are also efforts underway that will attempt to measure the outcomes as compared to the use of traditional texts.

For online textbook model number ten, the Instructor and student authored textbook that exists only online and intended for use exclusively online, what I offer here are some simple observations on my own experiences.

Advantages

    Learner Centered

- Little or no cost for the text
- Text may contain multiple presentations of the same points at different reading levels or in different ways
- Some text authored by peers
- Opportunity to have text revised while still using it
- Opportunity to contribute to the text as critic or author

    Instructor Centered

- Text customized to needs of learners
- Text easily revisable
- Text may include multi-media Items and features

Disadvantages

    Learner Centered

- Not traditional
- Not physical text to hold and mark

    Instructor Centered

- Need to revise
- Need to maintain links

For more information on the texts or the process contact presenter:

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