



Open Educational Resources

Beyond the Podium Podcast

Dr. John Jordi

Welcome to a special edition episode of the Beyond the Podium podcast series at the University of Florida. I'm Dr. John Jordi, and I'm your special guest host for this episode. And today we'll be talking with none other than the co-host of the Beyond the Podium podcast series, Mrs. Alexandra Bitton-Bailey. Alex is here today to talk to us about open educational resources, what they are, how she uses them in her classroom, how UF's faculty can develop and adopt OER content, as well as dispelling some of the more common myths about OER in today's educational environment. I'm very excited about this topic, so let's get started.

So what exactly are open educational resources? Let's hear from our guest, Alexandra Bitton-Bailey, for her thoughts.

Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

So open educational resources are resources that have been created by faculty, by publishers, by developers, but that are open to be used by anyone for either a minimal cost or no cost at all. There are some amazing resources out there that really provide all of the necessary material in one single resource. So you can access things like Open Stax, or Merlot, or you can access Canvas Commons where lessons have already been built with open educational resources on your particular field, or your particular module, or a particular topic that you're trying to tackle. And everything is there in one place for you, so you don't necessarily have to go find two or three things to meet your needs.

Dr. John Jordi

Open educational resources have not seen widespread adoption in many higher education institutions for a couple of reasons. This is due in part because there are some myths about OER that faculty and administrators might have heard about that have led them not to adopt. However, as these myths begin to be dispelled, we are seeing an increase on adoption. So let's hear from our expert about some of these myths and how she uses OER in her classroom.

Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

Number one, it's difficult and challenging to make that shift. And number two, that the quality isn't there. It's just as difficult to implement a new textbook or a new method or redesign a course

as it is to redesign a course using an open educational resource. It really does not require a significantly different or larger amount of work. And you can manipulate your open educational resources to really reflect what you need, you can change them. They don't have to be taken as is.

Dr. John Jordi

Open educational resources provide faculty with an opportunity to utilize high-quality course content at little to no cost to students.

Alex has taught French and humanities as a faculty member for the last 20 years. I'm excited for her to share her experience with why she chose to move to OER content for her courses.

Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

So the textbook in foreign languages and in many fields are so expensive, hundreds of dollars actually. And the only way that I felt capable of justifying that over the years was that I never asked my students to buy anything else for three semesters. So they could take French 1, 2, and 3 and only ever buy the one material. But it still averaged out to over \$100 a semester, even if they took all three courses. I didn't feel right about doing that to students because I remembered the struggle of being able to afford to go to school, number one. And I didn't feel like it was necessarily the most comprehensive resource.

Between the resources I've created and the resources that are available that are created by universities or national organizations like this, I found that that was ample material to develop an entire course and cover everything that students needed to have, but by simply using these authentic resources.

Dr. John Jordi

Faculty can sometimes struggle with how to practically create or add open educational resources to their course. Alex provides us with some insight into what her process is as a faculty member ready to put OER in her course.

Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

So in essence, you always create your course-- or you try to-- with backwards design-- so what is your end goal, what should students be able to do at the very end of this course, and what are the steps to get there. So you build your objectives. So once those objectives are built or are created, you have an idea of what are the incremental steps that students need to be able to achieve to reach each of those objectives.

And so for instance, in a foreign language we want them to be able to speak about plans in the future, things that haven't necessarily been solidified. And so here it would be the idea of being able to use the conditional, and the future tenses, and certain vocabulary that reflects talking about possibilities. So with that topic in mind, I would centralize the resources that would give them the nuts and bolts of that topic.

What I always do is I start with a reading that opens up and presents this kind of speaking, so a reading and/or a video that would speak to that specific topic that gives them the opportunity to explore new vocabulary and see the structures that they'll be learning in use.

From there, I would break that down-- they need the pieces in order to be able to create something like that themselves. And so what are the resources that I have available that would help them build up to that? So the skills that they need are how to be able to understand and recognize, how to be able to use these structures.

And so using the University of Texas, for instance, gives me the ability to provide them with the structure of the language, practice, and lesson. And so they get to build those remember skills, those understand skills. And then we would jump into something a little bit more advanced possibly, where they're analyzing the language by listening and reading transcripts of materials from the TV5 news channel, because that's a different set of skills. But it still applies to that same structure and idea. So we're building up.

Once we've managed to give them those skills using those resources, then they have the ability to create their own material. So you culminate with an activity that you create, because they've had this incremental practice, practicing the simple remembering skills, analyzing eventually, and then building up to creating their own work that reflects the initial piece that you introduced the topic with.

Dr. John Jordi

Alex has provided us with some great insight into her course, and next we will hear her give us some guidance into next steps into how we can all begin the process of finding out more about OER and potentially adopting it in our classrooms.

Alexandra Bitton-Bailey

The first step that I would recommend for anyone is to contact your subject-specific librarian. They are passionate about this work. They want to help you and your students. And they've been collecting material like this for a really long time. They've done that work ahead and they're willing to do more of that. So if you have a specific area you want them to help you find those kind of resources for, they'll be happy to do that.

The second thing that I would recommend is to contact the Office of Faculty Development and Teaching Excellence. Really we're here to help. It's a primary focus for our office. So please feel free to call us. We'll help you with resources. There is funding out there for courses and instructors that are willing to make that switch, because it requires some effort. So absolutely keep that in mind that we are a resource that is there for you.

Dr. John Jordi

As more faculty and students begin to adopt and use OER, coupled with the desire from our legislatures and government officials to lower the costs of attendance at higher education institutions across the nation, OER has the chance to have a major positive impact in our field for years to come.

As always, we want to thank you for joining us on another episode in our Beyond the Podium podcast series. For more information on OER, please feel free to visit the FDTE website at teach.ufl.edu, or reach out to us for any additional questions you might have. Thank you for listening.