Democratization of Scholarly Communication

Discussion of open educational resources (OERs) is a regular topic in the Chronicle of Higher Education and on academic listservs. Awareness of and interest in this movement of creating and expanding “open access” textbooks on campuses within the state of Michigan are growing, especially among community colleges.

In a poll last May to our Calvin faculty, 10% of the 97 respondents had used OERs, and 73% expressed interest in exploring or creating them. The 2017 report “Opening the Textbook: Educational Resources in US Higher Education” found that “the most serious issues [for OER adoption] continue to be the effort needed to find and evaluate suitable material.” Other concerns faculty expressed in this William and Flora Hewlett Foundation–funded study were long-term viability and maintaining currency. A great example of an OER is the college-level history text The American Yawp: A Massively Collaborative Open US History Textbook, which is created under a Creative Commons license “by scholars, for scholars”; the contributors are experienced college-level instructors supported by Stanford University Press.

The benefits of OERs fall to both students and faculty. Students are able to reduce expenses, as textbook costs have outpaced inflation by 400% since 2006. Faculty can benefit from having the freedom to fashion readings and educational experiences that fit more closely with course learning outcomes. By their nature, OERs can be modified and edited to fit local needs. The OER Commons and OpenStax serve as subject-level clearinghouses for OERs.

OERs are one segment of the growth in the democratization of scholarly communication and higher education. Many will have read recently that the University of California system cut ties with Elsevier, the Netherlands-based behemoth and global provider of scientific, technical, and medical information. The Open Access movement has been birthed out of decades of annual journal subscription price increases that exceed the rate of inflation and average roughly 6% per year. The UC system said, “Enough!” Scholarly professional societies have struggled to migrate to a digital version of their journals and have often shifted to large publishers like Sage and Elsevier to take over the technical process of publication. Unfortunately, this has created scenarios where journal subscription costs jump exponentially. Open Access does not need to convey lower quality: many are peer reviewed. The Directory of Open Access Journals has created a certification process to ensure high publishing standards.

As Calvin faculty publish their research, it is important to be aware of allowable uses of that research, before and after publication. SHERPA/RoMEO is one tool that can help faculty members understand whether they can self-archive and post a preprint, postprint, or full article online through outlets like institutional repositories, Academia.edu, arXiv, or on a personal professional website.

The landscape of scholarly communication continues to adapt and evolve. If you have an interest in exploring OERs or Open Access options, feel free to contact me to help you navigate the options.

David Malone, dean of the library
From the Faculty Activity Reports


Be sure to fill out your Faculty Activity Reports regularly. If you have questions, see the FAQ page.

Coming Up on Campus (Check the campus calendar for a full list of events)

**Monday, April 1**
- Chapel. Faith through computer science, with Derek Schuurman (Computer Science) and students. 10:00 a.m., Chapel

**Tuesday, April 2**
- Chapel. Joanna Wigboldy, God’s goodness. 10:00 a.m., Chapel
- Sexuality Series. Rachel Venema (Social Work) and research assistant Eleanor VanderArk, “Purity Culture and Sexual Violence.” 3:30 p.m., Meeter Center Lecture Hall
- The 4:04 Gathering. Marj Terpstra (Education). 4:04 p.m., Hekman Library, third floor

**Wednesday, April 3**
- Chapel. Sounds of gospel worship with Kenneth Henderson. 10:00 a.m., Chapel
- History Colloquium. Darrel Rohl, “Walls and Wheels: An Archaeologist’s Perspective on Border Walls in the Past and Present.” 3:30 p.m., Meeter Center Lecture hall

**Thursday, April 4**
- Chapel. Taizé. 10:00 a.m., Chapel
- Mathematics and Statistics colloquium. Elise Zipkin (MSU). 3:40 p.m., NH 276

**Friday, April 5**
- Chapel. Student worship team. 10:00 a.m., Chapel
- Biology seminar. Jacob Zwart, “Lake Carbon Flux and Productivity Responses to Future Climate Simulations.” 1:30 p.m., Science Building 010