Affordable Learning Georgia Affordable Materials Grants  
Research Grants Final Report

## Description

Research Projects will end with a Research Report due at the end of the Final Semester of the project. This will be a manuscript that is well-developed, concise, and suitable for publication. Research reports will be shared in an ALG repository under a [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0.](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) Supplementary files, such as data sets, will not be shared in the repository.

While there is no specific page limit, award recipients are strongly encouraged to produce succinct Research Reports; these should be written with a broad public audience in mind, including faculty and professional staff of all disciplines. A template will be provided, but an outline is provided here for planning purposes.

## Note: Online Submission Form

Once you have completed this template, to submit your Final Report, go to the [Final Report submission](https://survey.zohopublic.com/zs/xTCCvG) form.

Follow the instructions on the webpage for uploading your documents. Based on receipt of this report, ALG will process the final payment for your grant. ALG will follow up in the future with post-project grantee surveys and may also request your participation in a publication, presentation, or other event.

# General Information

**Date:** December 20, 2024

**RG Grant Number:** RG008

**Institution Name(s):** Kennesaw State University; Texas Tech University

**Project Lead:** Chelsee Dickson, Assistant Director of Academic Engagement & Instruction, Scholarly Publishing and Research, Kennesaw State University

**Team Members (Name, Title, Department, Institutions if different, and email address for each):**

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**Course Name(s) and Course Numbers if applicable:** N/A

**Semester Project Began:** Spring 2024

**Final Semester:** Fall 2024

# Narrative

*Give a narrative summary of your project. Include:*

* *Major goals and objectives, research questions addressed*
* *Research design, methods, analytical and data analysis techniques*
* *Findings and implications*

**Major Goals and Objectives, Research Questions Addressed**

The price tag of higher education has risen to almost insurmountable levels for many students. In an attempt to circumvent these rising costs, open educational resource (OER) creators and supporters must promote their work to increase the discoverability of low-and no-cost course material options. The literature suggests two common barriers to OER adoption: lack of awareness about OER in general and overall OER discovery (Allen & Seaman, 2014). Though once the OER—be it a textbook or other material—is produced, what happens next? How will other educators know that the newly composed OER exists, and why should they want to adopt it for their classrooms? OER advocacy and outreach is critical to all students, but especially to those who are often faced with the difficult choice between purchasing or renting a textbook for a course and purchasing food for the week.

In 2021, the Student Public Interest Research Group (Student PIRG) found that 10% of surveyed students reported missing meals due to impact factors related to COVID-19. Of that group, 82% reported not purchasing a textbook for a course (Nagle & Vitez, 2021). Simply publishing an OER is not enough—those who create an OER from scratch must effectively present their knowledge and expertise to ensure students are granted day-one access and are not forced to make such difficult, life-altering decisions. Promotion, advocacy, and sustainability are the next steps faculty must consider when creating an OER—steps which require a large amount of human capital.

It is not easy to bring an OER into existence, but after all that work and without a concrete promotion and advocacy plan, creators may find that their OER has not gained traction with their intended audience. There are many resources that OER authors might turn to for advocacy and promotion of their work, but the choices can be overwhelming. Librarians are in a prime position to help OER creators after creation to establish and maintain the sustainability of their work. Thus, the library sits at the intersection between creators, OER, advocacy, and outreach. Through grant funding awarded by Affordable Learning Georgia (ALG), the authors have conducted research on OER sustainability and advocacy. The research questions guiding the investigation were as follows:

1. How do librarians promote OER created by faculty?
2. How do OER creators perceive the promotion of their work?
3. How are OER creators sustaining their work?

**Research Design, Methods, Analytical and Data Analysis Techniques**

The study sought to examine strategies and resources for the promotion and sustainability of OER from the perspectives of academic librarians and OER creators. The study used a qualitative survey methodology to investigate the experiences and perceptions of those involved in OER creation, advocacy, and sustainability. By focusing on the promotion, advocacy, and sustainability of OER, the research aims to provide actionable insights for the OER community with an emphasis on leveraging the intersection between libraries, OER creators, and outreach strategies. The research addresses a growing need to explore how OER can be effectively utilized to increase access to affordable educational materials.

The research team developed a 19 question survey to address the research questions and capture the experiences and perceptions of OER creators and advocates. The survey, hosted on the Qualtrics platform, included both quantitative multiple choice questions and open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about participant experiences with OER advocacy and promotion. Demographic questions were included to better understand the participant population and were limited to type of institution and primary job function.

The survey consisted of 19 questions divided into three sections: (1) librarians promoting OER created by faculty, (2) OER creators’ perceptions of the promotion of their work, and (3) strategies for sustaining OER. Participants were invited to complete the survey, which took approximately 20-30 minutes, and were assured of confidentiality through an informed consent process. The data collection period spanned 11 weeks, and the survey was monitored regularly to track responses. No personally identifiable information was collected, and the survey was anonymized to ensure participant confidentiality and privacy.

A thematic analysis approach was employed to analyze the qualitative data collected from the survey. After the survey closed, the data were cleaned by filtering out non-consent responses, insufficient entries, and potential bot responses. The remaining 62 usable responses were then grouped and categorized into relevant clusters such as the type of institution, student size, and strategies for promoting OER. Each team member independently coded a selection of responses within these clusters, identifying key words, phrases, and recurring themes. The team then averaged their codes to derive major themes, focusing on the most prevalent patterns.

After the major codes were derived, one research team member continued with coding the qualitative data. This process helped identify three major themes related to OER promotion: Challenges, Sharing, and Strategies. The use of multiple coders and averaging of codes ensured the reliability and validity of the qualitative analysis. Microsoft Excel was used to facilitate the analysis process, allowing for a thorough examination of participant responses. Partially complete surveys were included in the analysis, depending on the level of completion, to capture as much relevant data as possible.

The research team chose to only collect two demographics from participants: type of institution and primary position. Additional demographics, such as age, race, and gender, were not necessary for the focus of this research. More than two-thirds of the 62 qualified respondents to the survey indicated they were either employed at a public academic institution with 20,001+ students (n=20, 32%), a public academic institution with 10,001-20,000 students (n=14, 23%), or a public academic institution with 5,001-10,000 students (n=13, 21%). The remaining third of respondents self-identified as being employed at private institutions.

**Findings and Implications**

Themes that emerged from the study include challenges; for example, a lack of time, energy, support, and personnel to effectively advocate for and promote OER. Secondly, the theme of sharing OER at events and other innovative programming initiatives helps generate excitement for said OER, despite the challenges. Finally, the theme of promotion strategies like encouraging faculty and OER creators to update their materials and submit their OER for peer review emerged from the survey responses.

The themes illuminate the significant impact that systemic challenges have on librarians’ ability to promote and sustain OER initiatives. The pervasive lack of time, support, and administrative backing not only hampers their effectiveness but also fosters a mindset of inherent limitations. Yet, the successful collaborations between librarians and faculty, particularly through the use of institutional repositories, demonstrate a powerful avenue for overcoming these obstacles. Addressing these issues is crucial; by enhancing support and resources, institutions can unlock the full potential of OER, leading to greater accessibility, innovation, and equity in education.

Findings revealed that word of mouth, depositing into OER collections, making recommendations, and sharing via listservs are practical strategies and resources for OER creators and advocates. Strategic outreach and strong advocacy can promote OER and open education to their fullest extent, as well as attempt to address any perceived barriers (Woodward, 2016). After all, what good is an OER left to gather dust on the proverbial digital bookcase?

# 2. Resulting Practice Recommendations

*In a bullet-point list, briefly list any recommendations the team has for future practices in teaching and learning with open and/or affordable materials as related to this research.*

The process of promoting an OER and sustaining its use is not without its challenges. Results of the study conclude that, while some librarians and creators do not participate in the promotion or sustainability of their OER, others are utilizing grassroots campaigns to market their work. Despite the fact that faculty and librarians generally do not have support, time, and a strategic promotion plan, there are pockets of participants who engage in small but seemingly widespread campaigns to alert others to their OER creation.

Creators and librarians must persist to reach a wide audience and ensure the OER for which they are responsible makes it into the hands of those who will benefit from its use. After conducting the research study and analyzing the results, the grant team identified various strategies for both librarians and creators to aid in the promotion and sustainability of their OER. Top strategies include:

* Word of mouth
* Depositing into an OER collection
* Recommending OER to faculty and librarians
* Promoting OER on listservs

# 3. Future Plans

*Give a description of any scholarship work involving this research planned for the future, including publications, presentations, and conference papers.*

*(Research Grants teams are encouraged to publish their findings in peer-reviewed journals after the end of the project. Open Access (OA) publications are preferred to increase access to research materials, but due to varied OA options and tenure/promotion procedures within different disciplines and institutions, OA publishing is not a requirement.)*

The grant team plans to continue their research in the future. Throughout 2024, the grant team presented their research at the Georgia State University Open for Student Success Symposium in March; Open Texas in September; and the Georgia Libraries Conference in October. Additionally, the grant team submitted their findings for publication in the open access journal *College & Research Libraries,* and they are currently awaiting acceptance. Furthermore, the grant team hopes to continue the research study with funding from a second Affordable Learning Georgia Research Grant. During their Round 24 study, the grant team discovered additional gaps and further questions. Their study findings revealed that a plan for newly created OER distribution and promotion is typically neglected.

Most OER creators and supporters do not consider incorporating post-production plans into their OER workflows. Additional research considerations include surveying librarians and OER creators to discover what support they require to include the promotion of newly created OER into their pre- and post-production planning, exploring the ways in which clean up processes can be incorporated into OER creators’ post-production advocacy and sustainability plans, and examining librarian and faculty perspectives of current integrated OER repository systems. The team applied for a Round 26 Research Grant in October 2024 to continue their research.

# 4. Supplementary Files

*Give a description of any supplementary files provided to ALG, such as data sets or figures. Indicate whether these files can be shared with the public.*

[Supplementary File 1: Cleaned, Usable Survey Data](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12q10glr_APPSF0cKls8rot06dBUrjlkNQGF6Md-fZGY/edit?usp=sharing) contains survey data that has been cleaned to remove duplicates, incomplete responses, non-consenting responses, and ineligible responses. This is the data we analyzed and coded. We consent to sharing the data with the public.

**References**

Allen, E., & Seaman, J. (2014, October). *Opening the curriculum: Open educational resources in the U.S.higher education*. Bay View Analytics. <https://www.bayviewanalytics.com/reports/openingthecurriculum2014.pdf>

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Education Fund. <https://studentpirgs.org/2021/02/24/fixing-the-broken-textbook-market-third-edition/>

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