eText Startup Project

Final Report

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Overview

The *eText Startup Project* is a collaborative initiative undertaken by the University of Toronto, with input from team members from the University of Toronto Libraries, Ontario Council of University Libraries, as well as other university and college stakeholders who participated in the project. The project successfully targeted three high level objectives as follows:

- Assess the needs of the Ontario higher education community in the domain of open text publishing
- Develop a set of flexible, browsable support resources
- Evaluate the potential for an ongoing community of practice in open text publishing

The resulting Open Textbook Toolkit is now available on the OpenUtoronto website at http://openetext.onlinelearning.utoronto.ca/.

Evaluation of Community Needs

From the outset, the project team adopted a community-based approach for ongoing project activities. The team facilitated a dynamic dialogue on open text publishing, an issue that subject experts face across Ontario universities and colleges when they plan to support their faculty authors. Throughout the project, this group of subject matter experts became a valuable Community of Practice (CoP) acting in advisory capacity. The project team tapped into the existing knowledge and wisdom of experts from online learning offices as well as librarians at Ontario universities and colleges.

The Project Team and Collaborators

This project was undertaken by a group of administrative staff, librarians and community partners who worked together across all phases of the project. The project team included:

- Dr. Laurie Harrison, Director, Online Learning Strategies at the University of Toronto (Project Lead)

- Katya Pereyaslavska, Accessibility Librarian at Scholars Portal, Ontario Council of University Libraries

- Mariya Maistrovskaya, institutional repositories librarian at the University of Toronto Libraries

- Stephanie Orfano, Interim Head, Scholarly Communications and Copyright Office at the University of Toronto Libraries

- William Heikoop, Coordinator- Online Learning Strategies at the University of Toronto

- Nick Baker, Director of the Office of Open Learning at the University of Windsor

- Giulia Forsythe, Special Project Facilitator for the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation at Brock University

This multi-expertise group closely collaborated for over a year, starting in January 2017, to complete the needs assessment, development and evaluation of support strategies for Open Textbook development initiatives. The project team also leveraged the ongoing research of the Ontario Council of University Libraries, published in an OER White Paper at https://ocul.on.ca/node/6820. In parallel with consultations and community discussions, the project team conducted a study to identify and evaluate existing resources, guides, and templates. In developing the Toolkit, the project team used this collection of evaluated existing resources

and community input to create original content that responded to knowledge gaps and needed support identified earlier from the CoP survey.

Development of Support Resources

Technical and legal issues were two critical areas in the Toolkit development process. Therefore, a content development team was formed including the development lead, a librarian with technical expertise who worked closely with faculty members and students, and a librarian specialized in intellectual property.

To identify the knowledge gaps that the Toolkit should address, an environmental scan was conducted to assess relevant existing resources. This environmental scan involved an independent research and a robust conversation with CoP members. The project team developed original content based on their expertise and feedback from the CoP.

To gather input on the Toolkit draft from its target audience, the faculty authors, a "card-sorting" tool was used to efficiently evaluate and categorize content. This required coordination with Information Technology Services staff to develop the evaluation tool, disseminated in the summer 2017, to collect community input with regard to the order, structure and the presentation of the content. Collected feedback was incorporated in the final product.

Community Impact

While the project team and collaborators were in the process of developing this Toolkit, a clear need for ongoing dialogue emerged. The CoP had many questions and challenges as they sought to establish effective workflows around faculty and student support in the area of OER, to

develop a better understanding of how peer institutions handled support initiatives, and to identify existing technologies that helped faculty authors develop resources.

The meetings were organized as round table discussions to allow for the free flow of ideas and the introduction of new subjects. Notes taken in these meetings were incorporated into the Toolkit structure. Meeting attendeess generally had substantive information to contribute or they would invite other colleagues to share their institutional perspectives.

Early in the project it became clear that this Toolkit was much needed in the community as faculty members were already discussing the issue across Ontario universities and informal peer-to-peer consultations were taking place in order to benchmark and determine the best course of action when providing support in the development of open resources. Capacity, time, cost, technology, and resources were seen to play a critical part in establishing institutional workflows. While the open movement is still fairly new to Ontario, those who are interested in authoring open text rely on significant support from their institution to learn how to create their material for the very first time. Library and technology professionals are important stakeholder groups to engage in capacity development initiatives as they often provide support and advice to faculty authors.

Dissemination Activities

The project team developed a dissemination strategy halfway through the project and identified diverse channels of communication to promote the project and its final deliverable. Dissemination activities targeted a diverse audience. Communication about the project as well as the final deliverable have been disseminated via:

- Listservs

  - Lib-OER (liboer@sparcopen.org)

  - OUCel

  - OCULL

  - OCUL

  - Rebus

  - Schol Comm in Canada slack channel (scholcommincanada.slack.com)

- Events

  - Open Education Ontario Summit- OCAD University - March 27, 2017

  - Ontario OER Day - Ryerson University - March 30, 2017

  - Creative Commons Global Summit - Toronto - April 2017

  - "The Continuum of "Open" in Education" (education stream) - THINK OPEN Conference, ORION, Toronto - May 24, 2019

  - OER Libraries Day - Centennial College - June 8, 2017

  - eLearning in Libraries Symposium - Toronto Public Library - November 16, 2017

  - Technology Enabled Seminar + Showcase (TESS) booth at eCampusOntario conference - February 2018

  - Techknowfile - University of Toronto "Open Your Texbooks " presentation by Laurie Harrison and Will Heikoop - May 2 2018

  - Poster session at TRY Conference - University of Toronto - May 2018

- Webinars

  - Voices of OER, March 5, 2018 (for further details see Appendix C)

- International Events

    - The Toolkit and the Voices of OER webinar were promoted on the [Open Education Week 2018](#) resulting in a spike of visits to the Toolkit site as seen through Google Analytics tracker.

- News outlets. The project was featured in the following publications:

    - University of Toronto *In the Loop* (News for UTL Staff)

    - News item featured on University of Toronto Libraries website.

    - Featured in The Bulletin Brief, a digest for staff and faculty.

Next Steps: Potential for an Ongoing Community of Practice

The success of this project stemmed largely from the interest for idea exchange and brainstorm within a community interested in open publishing. This interest was evident in the CoP meetings held throughout this project. New members joined the existing group at each meeting and conversations flowed freely to address a wide array of topics, not limited to, but highlighted in the list below:

- Instructor support and workflow integration for open eText publishing processes

- Strategies for publishing open, book-length content on institutionally-hosted platforms

- Overhead and DIY tools

- Ancillary resources

- Open textbook reviews and publication quality

- PressBooks / Scalar and format options (multimedia integration) + IT infrastructure needs

- Institutional support & funding / high level direction

- Staffing expertise + opportunities

- Engaging faculty and being prepared to provide support

- Adoption, metadata, version control, & tracking usage

While building on the intended project goals of raising awareness, engaging the community, building capacity, and supporting implementation, the project team identified a need for continued group dialogue. Open eText publishing is a new area for many institutions that are in the process of establishing their workflows around open education resources and supporting their faculty and students. The bulk of these logistics still need to be resolved and collective conversations may facilitate stakeholders' efforts to benchmark and normalize open eText publishing workflows.

The response of the participants in the project has been positive and to illustrate the impact we include three excerpts of CoP members' feedback about the Toolkit:

"I think this is fantastic. Nice curation of resources - and the resources that are included make sense and are of high value. It is written in an easily understood and navigable format. User-friendly on all levels." (anonymous survey response)

"Thank you for your time and your leadership."(anonymous survey response)

"I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate the Open Textbook Toolkit, especially the section on copyright. Thanks so much for creating this great resource." (Christina Winter, Copyright and Scholarly Communications Librarian at the University of Regina)

Toward the end of the project, CoP members were asked to completed another survey (Appendix B) with questions related to their interest in joining a more formal group. One survey question "Would you say that there is a need for an ongoing community network around open textbook and module development specifically in supporting instructors who express interest?" was answered with a resounding yes by all respondents. Many members of this community are now members of the eCampus Ontario's OER Rangers or hold other liaison or secondment roles that allow them to continue developing expertise in this area and act as facilitators and knowledge disseminators at their local institutions.

As noted above, the outcomes of this project have been shared across the province and beyond, via a range listservs, blogs, webinars, and conference activities over the past three months. We will continue to promote and share this resource, available to others for re-use under the CC-BY licence.

Appendix A

Preamble

The University of Toronto, in partnership with the University of Windsor and Brock University, have received funding from eCampusOntario for an Innovation project that aims address the needs of instructors and their teams during the planning, development and publishing an open text. While there are existing guides to use of particular platforms from a technical or formatting perspective, there is a need for guidance across a range of project process and implementation strategies that are critical to success.

With the new provincial emphasis on Open eText program initiatives, the availability of plain language, browsable Start Up Kits will be invaluable to interested instructors and resource staff across the post secondary sector institutions. By engaging the broader community in development of this project our project team hopes to assess the needs of the community in the domain of open text publishing, develop a set of flexible, browsable support resources and evaluate the potential for an ongoing community of practice in open text publishing.

The following survey has been informed by a round table discussion which took place on February 24, 2017 and is a part of the project environmental scan to evaluate community priorities. This survey should take you around 15 minutes to complete and draw on your existing expertise.

For further questions about this project, comments or ideas, please contact online.learning@utoronto.ca.

Section 1: Challenges

Please rank the following in order of priority for your organization (HIGHEST 1 - 5 LOWEST, N/A):

- Workflow models

- Setting up Wordpress

- Choosing a platform

- Staffing expertise

- Engaging faculty

- Challenge of beginning before the province has a provincial framework

- Derivative works best practice

- Adoption marketing

- Ideas about tracking use/metrics

Section 2: Opportunities

What do you see as most valuable opportunities for your institution in supporting faculty and staff in the production of open etexts? Please rank:

- Want to do a textbook sprint approach

- Facilitating connections with existing groups (ie. in BC)

- Developing reliable peer review processes for open etexts

- Learning about platform accessibility for Pressbooks or other

- Facilitating working relationships with Ontario Colleges

Section 3: Interests

Please rank the following list based on your interest in developing more advanced expertise:

- copyright and open licensing

- preservation and curation

- faculty support in authoring process

- technical infrastructure development

- accessibility

- dissemination and discoverability

Section 4: Resources

Please share your current and past resources or any other materials which you think might help our project team in the development of the faculty Start Up kit:

_____Comments box.

Thank you for completing this survey. For further questions about this project, comments or ideas, please contact_____.

Appendix B

Open Textbook Toolkit

Open Textbook Toolkit (http://openetext.onlinelearning.utoronto.ca/) is a resource for university and college faculty who would like to create their first open textbook. It was produced as a part of eCampus Ontario grant and this poll was designed to gather valuable feedback for the project team.

1. Do you have recommendations for our team as to events and conferences where this toolkit should be promoted before the project wraps up on March 31, 2018?

2. Do you think there is value in future development of a similar resource with a broader scope or a more advanced focus?

3. Are you currently involved with other external groups/communities dedicated to work around open education?

    - Yes

    - No

4. Would you say that there is a need for an ongoing community network around open textbook and module development specifically in supporting instructors who express interest?

    - Yes

    - No

Please share any additional comments!

Appendix C

Email title: Open Education Week 2018 & *Toolkit to Get Your Open Textbook Off the Ground*

As a part of Open Education Week 2018, on March 5, 2018 the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) in partnership with *Open Textbook Start-up Project*, aired a webinar intended to explore a number of practical issues around OER in Ontario providing faculty and student perspectives. The webinar recording is now available along with slides, speaking notes and other resources in a dedicated open folder which is offered to compliment the recording which sadly contains poor sound quality for one of the speakers.

Special thank you to our three guest speakers!

Helen DeWaard

Sessional Instructor

Undergraduate Studies in Education

Lakehead University

Landon Tulk

Vice-President

Western University Students' Council

Jessica O'Reilly

Instructional Developer (Faculty)

Cambrian College

In addition, this week also marks the official launch of the ***Open Textbook Start-up Project*!**

Wondering where to start on developing or adapting an Open Educational Resource (OER) project? A valuable resource has just been launched in the form of an Open Textbook Toolkit, collaboratively developed by University of Toronto, OCUL and community contributors.

Visit :http://openetext.onlinelearning.utoronto.ca/

This tool contains

- resources offered in plain language
- FAQ format include guides, tools, templates and sage advice on a range or key topics

Intended audience:

Instructors, librarians and students interested creating or adapting OER materials will find this resource an invaluable starting point. If you'd like to use this material please email online.learning@utoronto.ca to indicate what support you might need in adapting this tool to your institutional context.