

# Letter from the Editors

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We are pleased to present the inaugural issue of the Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education (JOERHE). As academic librarians, the three of us intersect with Open Educational Resources, open access, and open publishing in a variety of ways. Drawing on our past experiences with both traditional and open publishing models, we saw a need to create a dedicated, open scholarly space for those who wish to engage in community and scholarly conversation about all things open. It is exciting to see this idea come to fruition. JOERHE's vision is to reduce the barriers to publication and create a space where authors, reviewers, and readers can build a community that supports and encourages the growth of the profession through kindness to one another as scholars. We also seek to provide transparency in our publishing practices through clear and frequent communication with our authors, reviewers, and readers.

One of our primary goals with this journal was to implement an open peer review process that is as rigorous and validating as a traditional peer review, while also encouraging reviewers to provide constructive criticism and thoughtful suggestions for improvement. Additionally, we wanted to ensure that our reviewers are acknowledged for the work that we have asked them to do. Each reviewer has their review published alongside the article that they reviewed and is encouraged to cite their work. We know that recognition alone doesn't take the place of compensation for peer review, and we acknowledge that peer review is traditionally undervalued in academia. The call for open peer reviewers was met with enthusiasm from educators across the open community and we currently have a pool of more than 80 individuals who are willing to engage in the open peer review process. As this journal progresses, develops, and grows, we hope to continue to refine our open peer review process and create pathways for authors and reviewers to converse more directly as articles work their way through their reviews. Conversation is an important facet of community, and that is what we want to bring to JOERHE in the future.

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A sincere and heartfelt thank you to all who have been not only willing to support this journal as it finds its voice, but also to enthusiastically embrace the process of exploring an open publishing and peer review model. Particular thanks to the authors who entrusted their work with us, an unknown journal, and their kindness as we worked together to build this first issue.

This issue features two columns, eight articles, and one review and rubric of [\*Power, Profit, and Privilege: Problematizing Scholarly Publishing\*](#). We wanted to briefly recap our issue.

### *Columns:*

- “Tilling Rows and Early Harvests” by Dr. Megan Lowe describes their journey into the open access movement and the world of Open Educational Resources through their dissertation work at the University of Mississippi. The author notes that the work of advocating for OER in higher education is never really done and that we are continually challenging the assumptions we have about the resources we use.
- “How We Learned to Relax and Encouraged Others to Embrace OER” by Janet Baltes, Travis Mann, Emily Moran, and Stephanie Warden details the formation and efforts of the OER committee at the University of Wisconsin-Superior over the last two years. The committee developed an OER mini-grant program and a virtual training program for those who wished to adopt, adapt, or create OER.

### *Articles:*

- Mihoko Hosoi, Bryan McGeary, and Lana Munip in “Doctoral Students’ Perspectives on Textbooks and Open Educational Resources: Needs, Impact, and Future Directions” conducted interviews of 12 doctoral students in Education. They highlight impactful findings related to doctoral use of textbooks including the finding that course selection was not impacted by textbook cost, but the textbook did influence opinions of the faculty member.
- Natasha Lindsey, Jennifer Pate, and Lisa Ann Blankinship in “Case Study Exploring the Development of a Quality Open Education Clinical Microbiology Lab Manual and Online Experiential Lab Course” expanded upon the need for online materials to have a team of support and careful planning. This article explores how a microbiology professor, OER librarian, and an instructional designer worked to create an open Microbiology Lab Manual.
- Yang Wu in “Do OER Textbooks Have Value Beyond Cost Savings? An Analysis of Student Attitudes and Faculty Teaching Strategies in an American University” works to better understand

the effectiveness of OER as compared to traditional publishing models. Wu surveyed students in nine courses and identified an alarming trend: OER impact might be limited due to the fact that students are not necessarily even reading assigned textbooks. The study identifies how instructors teaching with OER play an important role in assessing the effectiveness of OER.

- “OER State Policy Discourse: Adding Equity to the Cost Savings Conversation” by Casey McCoy-Simmons provides a policy analysis of state policies that incentivize OER. The author analyzes the discourse of state policy makers and provides research-based policy recommendations for states looking to create or expand their OER policy.
- “Understanding Mathematics Instructors’ Perceptions of OER: A Mixed Methods Study” by Amie Freeman, Hengtao Tang, and Jade Geary looks at a limited adoption of OER in a mathematics department through a mixed method survey. The authors identified the barriers keeping mathematics faculty from incorporating OER included content quality, time concerns, and customization issues.
- Jonathan Bull and Michele Gibney, in “Programmatic Characteristics of Open Education Initiatives at U.S. Post-Secondary Institutions” take an innovative approach at evaluating the student success metrics through a quantitative study of 149 survey responses of program managers for OER initiatives at higher education institutions in the United States. The authors found that OER programs are often overlooked by committees, offer incentive payments for faculty, and have some assessment of the programs.
- Accessibility is always an important conversation in the scholarly community, and authors Teresa Schultz and Elena Azadbakht in “Conversations with Open Textbook Authors: The Factors That Help and Hinder Accessibility” report on the themes that emerged from conversations with eight open textbook authors. The themes that they identify clearly indicate the need for academic institutions to better support faculty with making OER accessible.
- The article “Just One Textbook? Student Perceptions of and Preferences for Open and Affordable Educational Resources” by Elizabeth Nelson and Christina Riehman-Murphy presents a survey of students in which an OER that was funded by a library grant program was utilized. The results showed that students appreciated the lack of cost and found the quality better or the same as commercial textbooks. But, students had concerns related to how they accessed these resources. The authors provide an analysis of the factors regarding access providing resources for faculty to consider when incorporating OER materials.

*Review:*

- Chelsee Dickson provides a detailed and thorough review of “Power, Profit, and Privilege: Problematizing Scholarly Publishing” by Amanda Makula. In addition to the review of the text, readers can view the JOERHE OER Textbook Rubric which allows our readers to quickly assess whether or not the OER may be right for their classroom or other scholarly purposes.

## Acknowledgments

*Peer Reviewers*

There are many people that we would like to thank as we present this inaugural issue of JOERHE. Our peer reviewers did an amazing job providing supportive and constructive feedback to authors sharing their own expertise and knowledge. We want to thank all of our peer reviewers who helped us to finalize decisions on our papers. We could not do this without you.

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