

Open Education Week Authorship Panel, 2023



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In March of 2023, the Markwood Center for Learning, Innovation, and Collaboration (CLIC) at the Jim Dan Hill Library (JDHL) hosted an Open Education Week Authorship Panel with University of Superior – Wisconsin instructors. The participants: Lynn Goerd, Rich Freese, Staci Gilpin, and Amanda Zbacnik were all previous participants in the CLIC/JDHL open educational resources programming and events. This instructor-centered event was held at the library. Though sparsely attended at the time in person, the recorded live-stream attracted more attention after it was posted on YouTube.

The following discussion has been edited for clarity, conciseness, length, and grammar. The full video is available for viewing on the Jim Dan Hill Library's YouTube channel.

(Lynn) Hi, I'm Lynn Goerd, and I am faculty in the social work program here on campus.

(Rich) My name is Rich Freese. I am an adjunct online music instructor with the University of Wisconsin – Superior, teaching through the Independent Learning Program. When I am not doing that, I am an instructional designer.

(Staci) Hi, everyone. I am Staci Gilpin. I am a UWS Alum. I am back teaching as an adjunct faculty in the graduate special education program, working with the fabulous Amanda. I was also previously an OER fellow with the Hewlett Foundation. Currently, I am working with Normandale Community College on the OERs they are creating for their teachers-of-color grant. I am very passionate about OER work.

(Amanda) I'm Amanda Zbacnik, I work in the Department of Education as an associate professor of special education. I have the honor of working with Staci on co-creating our, and what will be my first, OER.

(Stephanie) *What made you decide to author your own textbook for your class?*

(Amanda) Staci and I have collaborated on presentations in the past. She also has experience teaching in the graduate special education course world. We were discussing SPED 760 (Behavior Analysis and Intervention). As Staci mentioned, I wished we had a stronger text, as the current text was too clinical-based in nature. **That, coupled with my current Wisconsin Teaching Scholars and Fellows journey which emphasizes being equity-minded and student focused.** We were trying to find not only a better resource but also a free one.

(Staci) I agree 100 percent with everything Amanda said. I want to share an example of why Amanda and I chose the OER path. I have an email from a student who was giving feedback. This is towards the end of a term, and I had shared bits of the OER Amanda and I are working on with some students that I am teaching now. I was already supplementing with bits and pieces all over the place and I wanted to create a document for them that was more organized. I thought, why not share the document? This student said thank you for doing that. They also offered some feedback about the standard textbook. The

student told me "I didn't really open it and it was expensive." The text costs over a hundred dollars, so they wrote this is my critique sandwich or criticism sandwich — they said some good things, but also expressed "I am glad you're moving forward with an OER type text."

(Lynn) My answer is very similar. I had not used a text for years because I never found one that I thought was accessible to students and they were way too expensive for what I thought would be the value to the students from using it. I had been creating content that I either would send to students before class or I would deliver it and take about a third of the class before we would get to discussions and activities. I wanted to create material that they could review prior to class and it would free up more time while being free for them. This particular class is cross-listed with the public leadership and innovation major which is outside social work. I did not want a text that was just for social workers, I wanted it to be inclusive of the other majors. I wanted to create content that was more inclusive.

(Rich) The online courses I teach are generally general degree requirements. They are not people pursuing music majors. It is not as though this text is something that they are going to be referring to throughout their career, they are looking for three credits and something of interest. Beyond the money thing as a reason for choosing to do an OER, several years ago, when I was working on the course, someone I was collaborating with suggested that we create some study notes highlighting key concepts of the texts. I enjoy content creation and it kind of turned into a hundred-page summary of the two- or three-hundred-page text. I ended up creating this good chunk of content. In addition, the text I had been using, which is a fine text, had third party apps such as quizzes and online text which resulted in me getting emails; probably 95 of the emails that I received from students were from people who were having difficulty accessing the online text or the supplemental materials. It got to the point where I thought I could take all the time I am responding to these emails and I could use that to make an OER and be done with these barriers and the timing was perfect. By the time I was looking, I had just joined the Superior staff as adjunct faculty and I did a Google search about OER grants in Wisconsin and the first thing that came up was one of these University of Wisconsin – Superior Center for Learning, Innovation, and Collaboration at the Jim Dan Hill Library mini-grant applications that was due in a month. I thought *I will give it a try*. If it is meant to be, it is meant to be. Things aligned. Another big factor in me choosing to author my own textbook for class involves diversity. Working in the world of music, especially European influenced, classical music, your standard texts do not do a good job including diverse populations, specifically, people of color and women composers. Do not get me wrong, I still have work to do diversifying this content but, going through now, we are finding people who are not just dead white males for each and every one of these units. This is something I am very excited about. No matter what background a student comes from, I want to see them reflected in the material, even if it is Renaissance music. It is something I am passionate about.

(Stephanie) *What resources did you incorporate or consult in the creation of your OER?*

(Amanda) Documents such as the current syllabus and, for all education programs, making sure that the specific assessment pieces required by Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction that have to be included continue to be included in the courses. We are looking for materials that can assist in those type of assessments. Wisconsin Teaching Fellows offer a budgeting and supplies thing that you can use to purchase supplies — as a result I did a lot of searching for different little texts related to behavioral analysis. “Functional Behavioral Assessment” was a book I got, and “Equity Inclusions in Education Case Studies,” among others. Those are some of the texts that looked like they really aligned with the curriculum needs of the course. It just came down to taking the most applicable pieces and looking for applicable videos, or other supplemental things to include. We are about halfway through this process. Because our programs operate on a seven-week schedule, we decided to create a seven-chapter OER. That was the logic we used in the process of creating this.

(Staci) One more thing I want to add to what Amanda shared was I have done some work with OER and authoring and things and I had some resources that are open textbooks that have licenses on them — I do not want to get into a lot about licensing — but the authors license them, which is a really cool thing about OER, so they could be mixed and re-shared as long as I give them credit. Amanda and I give them credit within our text, and that is something that has been cool because I found bits and pieces of some of these open texts that I wanted to use but I did not like all of them. We have been able to pull parts, copy and paste chunks, with the author's permission, into our text and give them credit. That has been a fun thing to do. I suggest it if you are going to get into the OER authoring world — consider doing some of that.

(Lynn) I accessed one open-source textbook that was available, I scanned a lot of material, but I only found one that I had known about before. I incorporated that, of course complying with copyright expectations, and the rest of the content I ended up creating, which was never my intention, but that is what I found myself doing. Then, of course, pulling from a ton of references, I, like Amanda, ordered a bunch of books and did this mostly while I was on sabbatical. I read and read and read and incorporated a lot of information as references — but it was content that I put together.

(Rich) So, I mentioned I had the past study notes, my own summary of the old text. In addition to that, I found the lecture transcripts for instructional videos I had made. Echoing others' ideas, I remixed other sources. The University of Georgia System had a text with good information. I wanted to rearrange how a lot of the content was. There was a lot of pick — and choosing — I like this and I like that. There were other remixable sources I saw. Anyone who is excited about pursuing this — learn from what I did. Make sure you are keeping track of and really diving into the specifics of how they want the material cited. I discovered in the process that there were a couple of sources that they let you remix, incorporate and adapt as you see fit, but they also make sure that you include a link to their OER on every page that you remix. That sounds cumbersome, so I paraphrased and credit it. I moved that from the portions that I copy and pasted and made that part of the bibliography. Be respectful of what the creators have said about how they want their material presented. I learned in this process that YouTube has a filter for Creative

Commons licensing. My initial thought was — I teach music — I'll include YouTube links or say to students you'll be able to find famous pieces such as Beethoven's Fifth Symphony etc. on YouTube. After learning about the filters, I was able to find a downloadable listening list with about 90 music examples that had been shared on YouTube. That inspired me — I was already finding stuff on YouTube but I would also find things I really liked that did not have the Creative Commons license. It inspired me to email them and say I am making this textbook — and there is something about asking people, saying I would love to use this thing in my course and my students would love to see this — would you be willing to share this? Generally, they are receptive, everybody was honored: “**yeah, that would be wonderful, please use that, that's great, that's great.**” The last thing: what I love about an OER is that it can be a living document. I am catching typos, I am revising as needed, I am also crafting into my course as a midterm and a final assessment, students getting to write about whatever they want, and as an optional thing, do you give permission for us to take what you have written and add to this resource? You do not have to do this, this is your writing, do whatever you want with your writing. For future iterations, students in the course will be helping shape what this text looks like.

(Stephanie) *What did you find most frustrating about this process, and how did you overcome it?*

(Amanda) I would not call it super frustrating. I think I just had questions. My mind goes to how to make this OER something that students can easily access within the course shell to a variety of different learners. Staci and I have had conversations about not including charts or being able to consider Universal Design for Learning. With all these great resources we have bits of text, but how much is too much? At what point do we need to add something else in there, a supportive video for example. I would not say frustration. Open conversations such as we have two full pages of intense information here, do we need to break it up right now, and with what? Just questions here and there opening the door for more collaboration.

(Staci) To add to what Amada shared, I would say some advice that would help alleviate frustration that I found helpful was looking at other examples of OER textbooks out there in your field and paying special attention to the writing crafts — not only the content — how are they giving credit to those who have come before them?, how are they citing remix materials?, how are they doing their bibliography?, things like that. I would say through that process, Amanda and I have picked and chose what we liked and made it our own. I think looking at models really helped. Initially, that “how are you going to keep track and reference all this information” feeling is overwhelming, but once you get the system down it goes really fast.

(Lynn) I'm currently in the thick of the frustrating part. I think it could feel like it is a never-ending thing. It is not ready to be shared publicly yet, but I feel like I could always think that and, at some point, I just need to put it out there and get feedback. I am going to a conference at the end of March where it will be not necessarily public, but I will talk about it publicly. There are things about the platform I am using that are frustrating. For example, if I create a table and upload it as a JPEG it is not accessible — the content reader would not work. I try to use the table within the platform and it never looks right. Things like that — I am trying to use tools and I have ended up hiring somebody to figure out some of this stuff because I do not have the time. I am limited by my own capacity, but I am not willing to share it until it is better.

(Amanda) Thank you for bringing that up, Lynn. Once we are closer to the end of our OER, that point where you must be done. You also made me think this is a very time-consuming process, at least for me, and finding, chunking out time in my schedule is a big challenge, too. I do it, but it is time intensive.

(Rich) I agree with it being time intensive. For me, the toughest part was getting started, like any project. Once I got my first paragraphs in my first chapter, I got on a roll. I included various images — there is a host of stuff shared that is freely accessible to share — now it is time to add my pictures and what is this going to look like? After the first couple, okay, I am on a roll. Then it was the glossary, now I must make a glossary, and it was just getting on a roll. It is not that traditional text that is locked in stone. It is something where you can always go back. I think I have had various milestones, whether it is that the course is about to launch, and I think *okay, course launched, I am taking a break from this*. This panel was another one of those *I get to geek out about my OER*, leading up to that let's spend just a little bit of time doing some tweaks here and there. Knowing it's fine and I can go back to it is something that has helped me, because I know there has got to be more typos in there. I just put an announcement to my students "hey, I'm really excited that you have a free text, there might be some typos, if you want extra credit let me know when you see them, and you will get extra credit." So just being upfront with the students, too. Know it is not the most polished thing in the world, but it is free, and you can increase your grade if you see something.

(Stephanie) *What did you find the most rewarding about this experience, and why?*

(Amanda) I love the collaboration piece. At the end, the most rewarding thing will be that final — well, never final — our OER is going to be what is used in fall and then I look forward to positive, and constructive comments from students as well about the OER in itself.

(Staci) I would second Amanda again, I love partnering with Amanda and we both bring different perspectives in. It is also like professional development for me as an instructor, doing this process. It is that kind of growth, then to have a product at the end — something that we are working towards is even better.

(Lynn) I agree, I'm very proud of what I have done. I used it in the class and the feedback was positive, even though there were many things that needed to be fixed. I knew that there would be, but the students said, "you know, I've never had such an accessible textbook," and "I really like the style." I intentionally designed each section so it was no more than like five or six pages. I did the whole thing that way, and the students indicated "I've never read a book where you could like it." It is in sections, even if I said read two sections, what I planned seem to be valuable, so that was really rewarding. Also, just what I learned and how I have evolved as a professional. I never would have anticipated where I would be now, all the things that I learned and that I have already incorporated in multiple aspects of my professional world.

(Rich) There are so many things that I am happy about, such as how students are going to benefit from this text. I think what is most rewarding has been my own just like knowledge and learning. I learned a lot about great pieces of music that I only learned more about because I'm writing this OER. Let's branch out from all the other same composers I have been learning about, and I have loved geeking out on content creation and making use of what is freely accessible and something I am going to be using for a while. I made this on a whole scheme

of platforms, and it is kind of low-tech but, I made a Google doc. I learned, I have been using Google Docs for a decade, all sorts of new tips and tricks with Google Docs that I didn't know and picked up because I wrote a 280-page OER, so just the new little features and things along my way. I am appreciative of the personal growth.

(Stephanie) *What would you say to someone who is insecure about authoring their own OER?*

(Rich) I think that is healthy, this is daunting, and I think it is okay to acknowledge that knowing where to start, knowing what platforms to use — I just kind of embrace the uncertainty — I don't know exactly what I am going to get myself into. You look at that published text, especially an intimidating hardcover, and I think that text is the final project. I had goals of doing this for like five or six years before I finally did it. So if you are in a situation where you cannot do it this semester or even next semester, you just want to jot down your ideas and then think: this is the semester that I have the bandwidth — here are my bajillions of notes that I have been just adding little by little — I think that is a healthy approach, too, looking at an OER piecemeal. For example, you can have a finished text — what if you start with: "okay, I am going to use my text for two more semesters, but I am finding a couple articles so I think I don't need this chapter anymore because I have this article." Then, little by little you do your own writing to connect the dots and, with enough time and scaffolding, you have your own OER.

(Staci) I agree with Richard; that is kind of what Amanda and I have been doing over the past year, because it was Spring when I started teaching 760. I thought "oh, we need to do these crazy crisis management plans." Before I had a hodgepodge of things, but now I have built this chapter that I am going to share with students. Things like this are part of launching next year and we will kind of be finished. I'd been learning about this kind of stuff for two or three years before I decided "okay, now I am going to do it." I have been doing something with open pedagogy, which is a whole different thing, but it's kind of a progression.

(Lynn) I totally agree with everything that you all said. The only thing I must add is if you can combine something big with this and have that be the sabbatical project — I thought it was fabulous to be able to have that kind of time. I am not sure how I would be able to do this — I know that was a luxury — but I would not have been able to do what I did if I was not in sabbatical. It was nice because then I was able to dive in and I had planned it.

(Amanda) Yeah, I echo everything that has been said, and I think it is absolutely alright to be asking questions such as "do I have the time to do this?" and "what sort of resources are there?" Have that curiosity, use your local resources, think about how the creation of this OER could really help a ton of students that you work with in your courses. I am probably not alone in this, but I have had in past classes students reach out and say, "I can't buy my textbook yet because I have to pay my mortgage or rent." Those sorts of things, the sheer power behind statements like that — starting this process you will make a difference in students' lives.

Bibliography

Open Education Week Authorship Panel, March 9 2023. YouTube. Jim Dan Hill Library, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9DVJSVWEL8> 🐼