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SPRING 2020 COURSE READINGS PACKAGE

ALEXANDER COLLEGE

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Executive Summary

Alexander College (AC) recently announced that due to the social conditions surrounding the Covid-19 crisis, classes will be offered virtually for the Spring 2020 term. This decision has profound impacts on multiple services offered by the College including course textbooks. Traditionally, the bookstore would purchase physical textbooks and have them available for students to purchase and the library would have one copy of each text on 3-hr reserve. This system can no longer be implemented due to the virtual environment and new options for course textbooks must be sought. Considerations when choosing alternative textbook options include:

- Ability to teach course content
- Ministry and SASC requirements
- Student demographic
- Technological requirements
- Acquisition and dissemination
- Copyright
- Time
- Alternative textbook options

AC Librarians propose that faculty use content from Library databases, Open Educational Resources (OER), and Open Access (OA) options in substitution for print textbooks for the Spring 2020 term. A list of resources is provided as well as instructions on how to access AC Library databases.

Introduction

Alexander College (AC) recently announced that due to the social conditions surrounding the Covid-19 crisis, classes will be offered virtually for the Spring 2020 term. This decision has profound impacts on multiple services offered by the College including course textbooks. Traditionally, the bookstore would purchase physical textbooks and have them available for students to purchase and the library would have one copy of each text on 3-hr reserve. This system can no longer be implemented due to the virtual environment and new options for course textbooks must be sought. Implications to consider when choosing a textbook to acquire for a virtual class include: the ability to teach course content, ministry and SASC requirements, student demographic, technological requirements, acquisition and dissemination, alternatives to print monographs, copyright, and time constraints. This report proposes a variety of alternatives in order to address these considerations while still providing AC students with access to quality materials that supports course themes in the online environment that can be procured within a short amount of time.

Considerations

Course Content

Textbooks are vital to teaching many courses at AC. In many cases they are chosen due to their relevance to course content. Depending on the course, some electronic alternatives may be more prudent than others. If there is no online access code for your preferred text, is there a similar textbook that is open access? Can you replace the textbook with articles? Your discipline or course will likely have a significant impact on the type of alternative textbook you choose. It is also important to look at any relevant research to see what types of resources might work well for your students. For example, Ciampa, Thrasher, Marston, and Revels (2013) found in their study with 313 student responses "that non-business students are more satisfied with an e-textbook than business majors" (p. 7, 8). Although satisfaction is not a key consideration we have listed in this report, it is another aspect to consider when trying to plan for successful integration of course materials in the virtual environment.

Ministry & SASC Requirements

Course textbooks are outlined in AC Curriculum Guides and have been approved by SASC. Not being able to adhere to standards set by governing committees is a concern. However, our community is in a state of emergency and AC faculty have little time to find alternatives to physical textbooks. Additionally, although it is required that faculty teach their courses based on these vetted texts, as librarians and educators we know from experience that many of our students did not buy the physical textbooks. It is also important to note that AC is not the only post-secondary institution struggling with this change; many colleges and universities in BC are in the similar position of having to move to the online environment without much notice. Keeping abreast of announcements from governing bodies, publishers, and other institutions can help you make informed decisions.

Student Demographic

Decisions around choosing an alternative textbook should be made with AC students in mind. Many of our students are facing even greater technological, financial, personal, and social challenges than ever before. Anecdotally, we are aware that AC students rely heavily on their cellphones as their main device. However, units such as the Library and Writing and Learning Centre have continued to see students make appointments in the virtual environment. Many AC students should be familiar with accessing content on the AC Library website as Librarians visit classes every semester explaining this process, and how-to-videos will soon be available online. Student access and ability to use technology is a factor to consider when choosing alternative texts.

Additionally, cost of texts is an important consideration for many students at this time. It is probable that many AC students have lost jobs and may be more financially conservative in the upcoming months. Some B.C. post-secondary institutions, such as Langara, have implemented open textbooks projects while others, such as SFU and UBC, have dedicated resources to ensure OER is a part of their culture. Including more free textbook options for students is one strategy AC can use to stay competitive to students in the post-secondary market.


Technological Requirements

When choosing an alternative textbook, AC faculty, staff, and student technological capabilities need to be considered as each group may require access to the resource and individuals will be using different tools to access and use them. For example, online resources require an internet connection and device such as cellphone, tablet, or laptop. It is important that staff have some access or familiarity with the technology required to provide access to the resource. For example, Hung, Hsieh, and Huang (2018) found that students who have previous experience using e-textbooks expect more support accessing and using e-texts and therefore the institution should provide training resources, which is something AC Library could help provide (p. 184).

Acquisition & Dissemination

Questions to consider include, 'How will Alexander College acquire the resource(s)?' 'How much does the resource cost?' 'How will AC students acquire the resource(s)?' 'How will AC faculty obtain access to the resource(s)?' We do not recommend telling students to purchase print copies of textbooks on sites such as Amazon or eBay as we cannot guarantee that items will be in stock or that they can be delivered in time for the course.
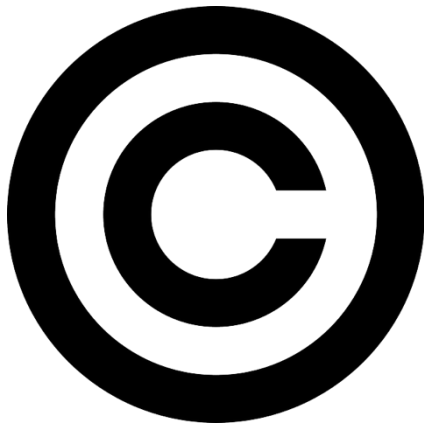
Copyright

AC adheres to fair dealing as outlined in the Canadian Copyright Act. Faculty must ensure that they are providing access to course readings ethically and legally. Trosow and Macklem (2020) outline the factors to consider in this time of emergency and sharing course readings in course management systems (i.e. Canvas). For further questions related to copyright, please contact one of the Librarians (j.haley@alexandercollege.ca or c.lindsay@alexandercollege.ca)

Time

Due to the short notice the AC community received about moving to virtual classrooms for the Spring 2020 term, it will be more difficult for some faculty to procure necessary textbook alternatives. It is important for AC faculty to evaluate the content of the OER resources they may choose to use. It is also important for AC to consider that evaluating OER resources is a time consuming and intellectually demanding task (Wang and Wang, 2017, p. 233). Faculty may wish to examine OER resources based on "educational elements" such as: "didactic intention, the clarity of the language used and the care of the motivational aspects" (Gomez, Cano and Diaz, 2019, p. 126).

Other questions to ask related to time include 'How much time will it take for the resource to reach my students?' 'How much time will students spend using the resource(s)?' and 'How much time will it take students to find and use the resource(s)?'

Alternative Resources

One of the largest hurdles to finding and using alternative resources to print texts is knowing what other options exist.

Some alternatives to print textbooks include:

- Access codes for online resources
- Scholarly journal articles from AC Library databases
- eBooks from AC Library databases
- Open Access (OA) Journals
- Open Educational Resources (OERs)
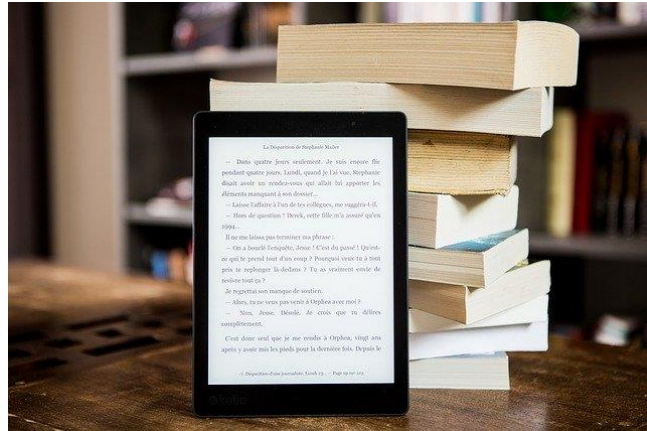
Access Codes

Online access codes are available for some textbooks (for example, *Microeconomics by Ragan 16th ed*). Keep in mind that this often takes the form of a publisher sending out a physical access card; students may therefore have to wait for shipping of that item. Additionally, the stock of such items may be in short supply and therefore cannot be guaranteed.

Journal Articles

Scholarly journal articles available through AC Library are a viable option for students and faculty as they are accessible at no extra cost. Utilizing these resources would be an efficient way to find readings for your classes. Full text articles can be read online, requiring no extra software, or may be available for download as PDFs.

eBooks

A variety of eBooks and chapters are available via AC Library Collections including the eBook Academic Collection and JSTOR Essentials. These resources are already accessible to AC faculty and students at no extra cost. Utilizing these resources would be an efficient way to find readings for your classes. Most full-text options are available to read online, requiring no additional software, or chapters can be downloaded in either PDF or EPUB formats.

Disclaimer: The Library does not subscribe to individual e-Books and therefore cannot guarantee perpetual access to individual titles, as subscription packages can change.

OA Journals

Open Access (OA) is defined as "the free, immediate, online availability of research articles combined with the rights to use these articles fully in the digital environment" (SPARC, n.d.). OA journals and articles can still be peer-reviewed and high quality. Utilizing these resources in your courses is an excellent way to provide support to the OA movement. The AC Library does have some OA journals in the collection. A list of where to find OA journals and articles is provided in the next section.

OER

Open Educational Resources are defined as "the open provision of educational resources, enabled by information and communication technologies, for consultation, use and adaptation by a community of users for non-commercial purpose" (UNESCO, 2002, p. 24). Many B.C. post-secondary institutions support OER initiatives in some form and in recent years the media has also picked up on this topic as a cost-effective textbook solution for students. Hilton (2016) reviewed 16 articles that focused on OERs and found both "students and faculty members generally find that OER are comparable in quality to traditional learning resources, and that the use of OER does not appear to negatively influence student learning" (p. 588). This option might be a useful alternative for one or more of your courses for the Spring 2020 term.

Proposed Spring 2020 Model

- Use articles & eBooks from Library Databases (pre-existing access for all AC students and faculty)
- Use Open Educational Resources and Open Access content (access is free of copyright limitations and costs to AC students and faculty)
- Ask the Library to speak with vendors around virtual Library textbooks access.
    - <u>IMPORTANT:</u> Note that online Library textbook access is dependent on the licensing for each individual title. It is likely that total or even partial Library access to a text in an online format will **not** be available. This may mean that there is no online version of the text for students or that students will be required to purchase individual eBook access.
        - Keep in mind that the cost of individual eBook access may be prohibitive for students in this pandemic environment, where many students may find themselves without a source of income.
    - Substitutions, in the form of pre-existing resources through AC Library databases and Open Access content, is preferred and may be <u>necessary</u> for most courses.

OER

Open Education Resources (OER) are public domain resources which allow students, teachers and the public to use and repurpose the information presented in them. OER resources can include textbooks, videos, journals, tests, and whole courses or course materials.

What is Open Access? Open Access means that the content is free of traditional copyright restrictions and free of charge to users.

What is a Repository? A repository is a collection of open access resources that can be accessed and searched through a centralized search engine. They will contain free educational resources, which may include (but is not limited to) textbooks, videos, journals, and course materials.

Repositories

- **Athabasca University Press** publishes open access books and journals. It can be found [here](#)
- **Canadian Association of Research Librarie**s provides a list of open access repositories for provincial educational institutions. The list can be found [here](#)
- **Knowledge Unlatched** publishes open access scholarly textbooks and journals on a variety of subjects. It can be accessed [here](#)
- **Merlot** provides open access peer reviewed online teaching and learning materials. Modules, assignments, and teaching content is available for a wide range of subjects. It can be found [here](#)
- **SOL*R** is a Shareable Online Learning Resource repository created by BCcampus. It includes textbooks, course and learning materials, and educational programs. It can be found [here](#)

Textbooks

- **BC Campus Open Ed** provides a large collection of open textbooks for a wide range of subjects. It can be found [here](#)
- **Directory of Open Access Books** provides open access to academic peer-reviewed books and book chapters. It can be found [here](#)
- **Free Tech Books** provides open access to CPSC textbooks and supplemental course materials. It can be found [here](#)
- **LibreTexts** provides open access textbooks for a variety of subjects. It can be found [here](#)
- **Noba Project** provides open textbooks for psychology. It can be found [here](#)
- **OAOpen** provides open access academic books, mainly for humanities and social sciences. It can be found [here](#)
- **OER Commons: Open Textbooks** provides open textbooks and supplemental resources for all subject areas. It can be found [here](#)
- **Open Book Publishers** provides fee online editions of textbooks in a variety of subject areas. It can be found [here](#)

- **Open Library Ontario** provides open textbooks in a variety of subject areas. It can be found [here](#)
- **OpenStax** provides peer-reviewed, openly licensed college textbooks in a variety of subjects. It can be found [here](#)
- **Open SUNY Textbooks** provides open access textbooks in a variety of subjects. It can be found [here](#)
- **Open Textbook Library** provides a growing catalog of free, peer-reviewed, and openly-licensed textbooks. It can be found [here](#)
- **University of Calgary Press** provides open access to some published titles. Open Access titles can be found [here](#)

Journals and Journal Articles

- **ArXiv** provides scholarly articles for Physics, Math, CPSC, Stats, and Biology. It can be found [here](#)
- **CogPrints** offers self-archived papers in psychology, philosophy, biology, computer science. It can be found [here](#)
- **Core** contains open access content for humanities research papers. It can be found [here](#)
- **Directory of Open Access Journals** contains open access journals and articles from a variety of disciplines. It can be found [here](#)
- **Public Library of Science** contains open access journals and articles for biology, genetics, and medicine. It can be found [here](#)
- **SocArXiv** provides scholarly articles for social science topics. It can be found [here](#)
- **Zenodo** provides open access to scientific papers. It can be found [here](#)

Time Restricted Resources

- EBSCO Faculty Select "OER material as well as the option to discover more than 255,000 DRM-free *EBSCO eBooks* in one place, **available at no charge** for faculty to use through June 30, 2020" [here](#)

AC Online Content

Accessing AC Library Databases

The AC Library subscribes to a variety of databases in order to provide learning resources that support curriculum. Databases by subject are listed here. Email the Library for log-in details.

Please note there will be content in databases that AC does not have access to such as articles without full text and certain films on Kanopy. If you are interested in a resource that you cannot access via our holdings, please contact one of the Librarians for assistance (j.haley@alexandercollege.ca or c.lindsay@alexandercollege.ca).

Sharing AC Online Content with Students

To promote students' development in their information literacy skills including finding information, we recommend that professors share the full citation with their students in Canvas and require students to download or locate articles/eBooks directly from the databases themselves. As one of the institutional outcomes of Alexander College, the ability to find known existing articles is vital to academic success.

If you are interested in sharing a link with your students, then we recommend sharing the permalink as this link will ensure that students have consistent access to the material.

Conclusion

A variety of factors will influence the choice of alternative textbook options to students during this emergency. There is no one size fits all for all the courses at AC. It is the hopes of the authors that this report provides some guidelines to faculty for evaluating and choosing resources to use for their course readings in the virtual environment. In their study, Hung, Hsieh, and Huang (2018) explain "that lecturers may play a mediating or supervisory role to guide students' use of e-textbooks during lectures" (p. 184). No matter which route an instructor selects for their course, it is clear that these decisions should be made with AC students in mind. Student support for accessing and using these new resources must be made available from instructors and the Library.

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