A Brief Guide to Affordable Learning LOUISiana & Introduction to Curriculum Driven Acquisitions
Produced by LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network
January 2016
Affordable Learning LOUISiana

The Affordable Learning LOUISiana initiative was developed with $145,000 in proof-of-concept funds from the Louisiana Board of Regents under the direction of Commissioner of Higher Education, Dr. Joseph C. Rallo to demonstrate how LOUIS: the Louisiana Library Network could partner with libraries and faculty to use eTextbooks and open access materials to reduce student expenditures for required course materials. This project was begun due to the rising costs of student textbooks as described in the following pages. This document provides a brief summary of the environment related to commercial textbook cost, national, state, and university initiatives to reduce student expenses, best practices for new textbook affordability initiatives, and recommended steps for LOUIS with a focus on the cost saving initiative of Curriculum Driven Acquisitions (CDA). A full report of the Round One outcomes of Affordable Learning Louisiana eTextbook initiative is included in the Appendix.
The situation:

Textbook costs have risen at a rate that has outpaced inflation.

Textbook expenses now account for “as much as 39% of tuition and fees at a community college and 14% of tuition and fees at a four-year public institution” (Senack, 2014). In Louisiana retention and graduation rates have suffered (Louisiana Board of Regents) and nationally, increased costs of education including textbooks are recognized as factors for decreased persistence rates.

![Figure 1: United States Government Accountability Office Report to Congressional Committees. (2013) College Textbooks: Students Have Greater Access to Textbook Information. p. 6.](image)

**Resources**


What Can You Do With $1,440,000,000? (n.d.). Retrieved December 1, 2015, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ix2WvkHPkVs


Federal and State Policies:

There is increasing legislative action to curb student debt.

In September of 2015 the Department of Education appointed the first Open Education Adviser to lead national initiatives to promote open education. House and Senate versions of Affordable College Textbook Act identify open textbook development as a method to reduce the cost of higher education. In California, the College Textbook Affordability Act of 2015, provides funds to campuses in order to reduce the cost of required course materials.

Resources


OER and OA Repositories:

Open Education Resources (OERs) support student learning and reduced educational costs.

OER Commons and Merlot have curated a combined set of over 100,000 open access (OA) resources for education. The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and The Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB) contain collections of open access journal and monographs. These resources can be used and adapted at other universities without charge. Knowledge Unlatched demonstrated how the power of cooperative library purchasing can “unlatch” scholarly monographs publishing models and create open access scholarly book collections for lower individual costs to libraries.

Resources


- Merlot: https://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm
- OER Commons: https://www.oercommons.org/
Consortia and University Initiatives:

California, Georgia, Minnesota, and Virginia lead affordable learning efforts at universities and through library consortia projects.

OpenStax at Rice University developed a core collection of peer-reviewed textbooks for introductory college courses. Tidewater Community College developed a 2 year Business Administration degree with $0 in required textbooks and has seen positive gains in retention and completion. Affordable Learning Solutions in California and Affordable Learning Georgia are developing open education resources by providing faculty incentives.

Resources


OpenStax developing textbooks that deliver personalized lessons - YouTube. (2015, December 1). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1NCL47P-Ug
Affordable Learning LOUISiana Outcomes:

Four projects implemented in 2015.

Libraries, in conjunction with faculty, implemented projects to replace traditional print textbooks with open access textbooks, library-owned e-books, or rented e-books purchased for individual students. Completed project reports show that 1,410 students saved $137,640.21 for a total project Return on Investment (ROI) of $128,095.67.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Amount Reimbursed</th>
<th>Date implemented</th>
<th>Maximum ROI</th>
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<th>Estimated student cost savings</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Fletcher</td>
<td>$788.79</td>
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<td>$16,451.61</td>
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<td>Nicholls</td>
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With a $5000 investment in Knowledge Unlatched, LOUIS supported the provision of 78 University Press eBooks at $1.42 per book/per institution.

In order to develop the collection of LOUIS-owned eBook collections, LOUIS consulted with the E-resource Interest Group on the purchase of new eBook titles for the Gale Virtual Reference Collection. The initial collection was purchased with Board of Regents funding in 2009 for $231,000 and included 586 volumes. This is the only shared collection of eBooks which is currently available statewide. Through a collaborative collection development effort, the decision was made to add or update 61 volumes for $49,761.95 or $18.12 per volume/per institution.

In addition, LOUIS has begun negotiations to trial the first of its kind eBook curriculum driven acquisitions (CDA) program, modeled after a successful program implemented at Louisiana State University (LSU). In this statewide program, LOUIS will allocate funds to individual libraries to work with faculty in order to purchase low-cost eBooks that can be used by students in lieu of traditional commercial textbooks. The books are then owned in perpetuity by each library and can be used free-of-charge by students. At LSU a similar model program, combined with active librarian outreach, has resulted in $900,000 of potential student savings.
Next Steps for LOUISiana?

Working with campus, system, and state-wide faculty, LOUIS libraries are committed to identifying and investing in eBooks that directly support the classroom and curriculum in order to offset costs to students. This innovative new purchasing model, Curriculum Driven Acquisitions (CDA), supports the goals of Affordable Learning LOUISiana by investing in eBooks and eResources that are owned by the library and used in the classroom curriculum.

Suggested Next Steps

- Allocate funds and invest in Affordable Learning LOUISiana Curriculum Driven Acquisition:
  - to reduced student course expenditures
  - to develop library collections
  - to support broad adoption of OA and OER
  - to provide technology solutions to support the initiative
  - to create partnerships with Affordable Learning Georgia and Affordable Learning Solutions (California) to develop project and assessment model
  - to develop a model to be used by the Louisiana Department of Education to serve K-12
APPENDIX: Affordable Learning LOUISiana Round One Outcomes Report

In the summer of 2015, The Louisiana Board of Regents allocated $45,000 to LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network to fund proof-of-concept projects to reduce direct expenses of students for textbooks. This was brought about by alarming statistics on the extreme rate of inflation for commercial textbooks and the impact those expenses were having on student loan debt, student willingness to purchase required texts, and the unfortunate consequences these factors have on student success and retention (Senack, 2014).

Round One commenced with a call for proposals to the forty-five Louisiana Deans and Directors of libraries at institutions of higher learning including both two-year and four year schools to replace course texts with low or no-cost options. Each project was eligible for funding of approximately $1000 and funding was available for every institution to participate. Several possible activities were suggested as well as the option to design an alternative program so long as the outcomes demonstrated saving to students.

Suggested activities included:

a) To identify and add to the library’s collection eBooks that could be substituted for required print textbooks or monographs. Recommended criteria: Digital Rights Management (DRM) free; unlimited use; perpetual access.

b) To create an Open Educational Resource (OER) and add it to a publically accessible OER collection.

c) To identify and use OERs in place of commercially produced print materials normally used in the classroom.

d) To use a subscription eBook vendor that allows rental of a specific eBook for the semester.

Program proposals were reviewed by the LOUIS Executive Director and a LOUIS Board member, the Dean of the Louisiana University Marine Consortium (LUMCON). In total thirteen project proposals were submitted and eleven projects were completed for a first round total expense of $9,544.54. The projects were implemented in CY2015 over the summer and fall academic semesters (see Table 1).

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Projects in Round One were self-limited to suggested activities “a”, “c” and “d” above. No project to create open access education resources or textbooks was submitted, option “b”. Completed project reports show that 1410 students saved $137,640.21 for a total project Return on Investment (ROI) of $128,095.67. Projects in category “a”, and “c” demonstrated the greatest ROI with a total of $5,221.44 expended and $124,569.51 saved by students for an ROI of $119,348.07. Additionally because projects in category “a” and “c” involved the use of eBooks that are owned in perpetuity by the library or OERs that can be freely reused, the initial expenditure of $5,221.44 will likely result in future savings as courses tend to be taught in multiple semesters with the same course materials assigned. **If those courses are repeated two times, students will be saved out of pocket expenditures totaling as much as $373,708.53 with a one-time expenditure of $5,221.44.**

Less successful, but still exhibiting a positive ROI, were the projects involving the rental of eTextbooks on behalf of students, type “d” above. Those projects tended to have a higher cost per textbook and do not result in new library-owned materials which have the capacity to be re-used in subsequent semesters. Hybrids of “a” and “d” type projects were also trialed. These involved the purchase of individual eTextbooks, which were then owned by the students. Similar to the rental model, these textbooks have a higher cost of ownership and no residual possibility for student savings. Based on these outcomes, LOUIS recommends eliminating option “d” from future funding opportunities, as well as projects where purchased materials would not be owned by the library.

In the fall of 2015, a second allocation of $100,000 was made to LOUIS for continued development of eTextbooks models. Three initiatives have been pursued thus far under this funding: direct acquisitions of eBook collections, sponsorship of an international open access eBook initiative, and the development of a curriculum driven acquisitions program (CDA).

In order to develop the collection of LOUIS-owned eBook collections, LOUIS consulted with the E-resource Interest Group on the purchase of new eBook titles for the Gale Virtual Reference Collection. The initial collection was purchased with Board of Regents funding in 2009 for $231,000 and included 586 volumes. This is the only shared collection of eBooks which is currently available statewide. Through a collaborative collection development effort, the decision was made to add or update 61 volumes for $49,761.95 or $18.12 per volume/per institution.

With the support of the LOUIS Executive Board, LOUIS also invested $5,000 in the Knowledge Unlatched Round 2, eBook collection on behalf of Louisiana institutions of higher education. When fully funded, Knowledge Unlatched will provide open access to a collection of 78 new Humanities and Social Sciences eBooks from 13 University presses. In its pilot project, Knowledge Unlatched received pledges from almost 300 libraries and provided open access availability to 28 scholarly monographs. One recognized solution to reducing the rising cost of scholarly publications is to support open access publishing models. By supporting open access models such as Knowledge Unlatched, LOUIS is able to offer another mechanism to reduce student and library costs. **With a $5000 investment, LOUIS supported the provision of 78 eBooks at $1.42 per book/per institution.**

In addition, LOUIS has begun negotiations to trial the first of its kind eBook curriculum driven acquisitions (CDA) program, modeled after a **successful program implemented at Louisiana State University (LSU).** In this statewide program, LOUIS will allocate funds to individual libraries to work with
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Round Two will commence with spring 2016 projects. In order to promote the program, LOUIS invested staff time promoting International Open Access Week to highlight the opportunities for faculty to utilize peer-reviewed open access textbooks like those in the OpenStax collection produced by Rice University in conjunction with funding partners including The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. LOUIS staff also led professional development focused activities to highlight how librarians could engage with faculty to promote low and no-cost textbook alternatives as well as to share preliminary results of Round One projects. For Round Two a new option to purchase sample print copies of open access textbooks has been suggested. This would provide an instructor review copy of open access options similar to the review copies provided by commercial textbook publishers.

Lastly, given the success of the initial round of funding and the demonstrated capacity of libraries to make great impacts on reducing the cost of higher education, LOUIS recommends the allocation of multi-year Board of Regents funding to support eBook collection development that will reduce direct expenses to the student. A suggested annual allocation for cooperative collection development and program development would enable LOUIS to continue this program through a statewide curriculum driven acquisitions program, which LOUIS will be piloting in CY2016.