



## FROM THE DIRECTOR



Students have passed the midway point in the fall semester. Before you know it, they'll be closing out the term as first-year freshmen, soon-to-graduate seniors, or somewhere in between. The desire at Florida State is to provide all our students with a quality, affordable education to prepare them for the work world and beyond. As the cost of higher education continues to rise, ensuring an affordable education has become a challenge.

At the Office of Distance Learning, we strive to meet this challenge by implementing innovative ways to make online programs and courses affordable for all students. Affordability is a key element of our long-range strategic plan. One goal in particular is to help expand the development and use of open educational resources (OER) in conjunction with the FSU Libraries and colleges.

In this issue of *Distance Up Close*, you'll read more about this OER initiative – what it is, how it benefits instructors and students, and its importance to distance learning. Additionally, you'll read about the services and resources the FSU Libraries provide distance learning faculty to support the needs of their courses and students. We also take a look at the FSU Bookstore textbook program and the FSU virtual lab, both of which offer options to aid students in affordability.

In other news, we feature a new automated tool that will help enhance the Testing Center experience for instructors and students. We round out tech news with Canvas updates, including improvements to the Gradebook and Conferences.

I wish you the best for the remainder of the term. Please let me know of any way we can assist you or your students.

Sincerely,  
Robby Fuselier

# IN THE NEWS

## FSU Libraries Key to OER Initiative



By [Camille Thomas](#), FSU Scholarly Communication Librarian

### What are open educational resources?

Open educational resources (OER) are teaching, learning, and research resources that are free of cost and access barriers and which also carry legal permission for open use. Open educational resources are *not* the same as illegally downloaded textbooks – they are free *plus* permission. They are not typically created by commercial entities, but rather by and for experts and even students. They are not rented or limited and can be kept forever.

### How do they benefit instructors?

Open licensing with [Creative Commons](#) allows legal and proactive attribution, remixing, sharing, and updating. Educators are able to update materials rapidly, adapt according to preferred teaching style, include diverse perspectives, and [engage students deeply with learning materials](#). Open licenses allow instructors to have a more flexible and intuitive use of materials that reflects how we teach and learn today.

### How do they benefit students?

[A report on student debt](#) from the Institute for College Access & Success showed that students graduating as part of the class of 2016 had an average of \$35,000 in debt. In particular, the [price of textbooks has skyrocketed](#) more than three times the rate of inflation for decades. College students face steep price tags that can top \$200 per book, often competing with their ability to pay for expenses such as food, rent, and medical care.



Institutions using OER in the United States and Canada have saved students \$921,783,169, according to a [challenge issued by the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition \(SPARC\)](#). As of Summer 2019, FSU estimates student savings of \$102,190 from the Libraries' Alternative Textbook Grants alone. Beyond savings, several studies have shown students [perform the same or better with OER than with traditional textbooks](#). Drop, fail, and withdrawal rates decreased significantly for [low-income and part-time students when open educational resources were used in courses](#).

### Why is OER important for distance learning courses and programs?

Open educational resources are well suited to fit the needs of distance education instructors and students for multiple reasons. Online instructors rely on varied materials to support their pedagogical needs, including streaming media, websites, and digital learning objects. The combination of online learning and open educational resources brings unique strengths to the academic environment and increases scalability for larger enrollment and improved engagement. Furthermore, because students enrolled in distance learning courses pay additional fees, choosing affordable alternatives to traditional textbooks offsets some of this cost to students.

## How can I find OER?

More than 652 total open textbooks are available, and they are used by more than 3,000 faculty worldwide, according to the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) Student Government Resources and the Open Textbook Network. Many OER have been peer reviewed by instructors. There are resources that centralize materials, such as the [Open Textbook Library](#), which includes visible reviews from faculty instructors. You can find open textbooks in the FSU Libraries Catalog Search by searching by subject area or textbook format (see screenshot below).

The screenshot displays the FSU Libraries OneSearch interface. At the top, there are navigation links: "Back to FSU Libraries", "New Search", and "Publications". The main search area features a search bar with "chemistry" entered, a "Search" button, and three "Select a Field (optional)" dropdown menus. Below the search bar are two "AND" dropdown menus for combining terms. To the right of the search bar are links for "Create Alert" and "Clear ?".

Below the search bar, there are navigation options: "Basic Search", "Advanced Search", and "Search History".

On the left side, there is a "Refine Results" sidebar. It includes a "Current Search" section with "Find all my search terms:" (chemistry) and "Expanders" (Also search within the full text of the articles, Apply equivalent subjects). There are also "Limiters" (Available @ FSU) and a "Limit To" section with checkboxes for "Full Text", "Available @ FSU" (checked), and "Catalog Only".

The main search results area shows "Search Results: 1 - 10 of 23,254,743". The first result is a "CREDO REFERENCE" titled "Chemistry", described as a "branch of science concerned with the properties, composition, and structure of substances". It lists "Other Topics: organic chemistry, Physics & Chemistry, Separation (Chemistry), Neutralization (".

Below this, there is a section titled "1. Chemistry" with a document icon and the text "01/01/2015 1 online resource Language: English, Database: FSU Catalog". A green box highlights the "Subjects: Science -- Textbooks; Chemistry -- Textbooks" text. Below this are links for "Connect to online content", "View Full Catalog Record", and "Report a Problem". A "Location" section is also visible, with a green box highlighting "Open Access Educational Resources".

The [George Mason University Metafinder](#) is a search engine of all existing large OER repositories and is a great resource for instructors who may use materials other than standalone textbooks (monographs, syllabi, lecture notes, primary resources, etc.). If you find these results are still overwhelming or not quite the best fit, an FSU librarian can help you dig deeper to identify the best fit for your course.

## Does FSU offer support for working with OER?

FSU LIBRARIES



### ALTERNATIVE TEXTBOOK GRANTS

FSU Libraries offer Alternative Textbook Grants (ten \$1,000 grants available) to support FSU instructors in replacing commercial textbooks with little-to-no-cost materials with flexible copyright licenses. Applications are due February 1, 2020, for on-campus summer and fall courses and November 15, 2019, for International Programs. Thanks to a partnership with International Programs, an additional 10 grants of \$1,000 will be available for faculty who teach at FSU's international study centers. You can read more about [alternative textbook grants](#) as well as [textbooks published through FSU Libraries](#).

For more information on OER, contact Scholarly Communication Librarian [Camille Thomas](#).

## Library Services Support DL Faculty



By [Lindsey Wharton](#), FSU Extended Campus & Distance Services Librarian

The goal of FSU Libraries is to provide off-campus faculty with equitable library services and resources to support the diverse needs of their courses, students, and personal research. As an online instructor, you have access to all of the library's online and print resources whether you are on campus or teaching from a remote location. Please see our resources and services below and contact Extended Campus & Distance Services Librarian [Lindsey Wharton](#) with any questions or requests.

## Access to Collections & Resources

Our collections include over 887 databases, 86,000 journals, and one million eBooks, all accessible through [our library website](#), anytime, anywhere. We offer specialized reference support through our subject librarians as well as our Ask A Librarian chat services, which you can find on our [Get Help page](#). Check out our [Research Guides](#) for subject- and course-specific guides to our resources.

## Library Instruction & Information Literacy Support



Partnering with faculty presents exciting opportunities for students to engage with library resources and services within their course curriculum. Please reach out to [your subject librarian](#) if you are interested in scheduling a library instruction session for your course. I can tailor my webinar-style session depending on your needs and collaborate with your subject librarian to provide in-depth information literacy support. Our [workshops and events](#) are live streamed online and are available to you and your students.

## Copyright Help for Online Teaching

The [TEACH Act](#) makes many exemptions for face-to-face courses, but [online teaching is more conditional](#) due to the nature of the web. A good rule of thumb is using an amount of a work comparable to that performed or displayed in a live classroom, such as limiting access and copies to registered students and/or individual class sessions. Instructors can make [Fair Use](#) claims, within reason, when TEACH Act guidelines may not be clear or use is integral to the class. For more information and tools, visit the [copyright resources page](#) or contact Scholarly Communication Librarian [Camille Thomas](#).

## Library Support for Teaching & Learning

The Libraries are continually working to enhance our support of teaching and learning at FSU, whether on main campus or beyond. You can learn more about some of our exciting initiatives and collections below.

- [FSU Libraries & Canvas Integration](#)
- [FSU Libraries & Streaming Media in Your Course](#)
- [Special Collections & Archives](#)
- [Materials Purchase Suggestion Form](#)
- [Library Express Delivery Service \(LEDS\)](#)

You can find additional [faculty services on the FSU Libraries website](#). We look forward to partnering with you to support your research and teaching endeavors.

## Program Reduces Digital Textbook Costs



Faculty wishing to help their students with the rising cost of course materials can direct them to the Follett Access textbook program. Via a partnership between Student Business Services and the FSU Bookstore, Follett Access allows students to rent or purchase eligible digital textbooks at a reduced price.

Student Business Services will send students an email describing the program and its benefits. About 30 days before the start of the semester, the FSU Bookstore will email a sign-up link to students enrolled in a course that is eligible for Follett Access. Note that student athletes or sponsored students whose books and expenses are already covered by other entities may not be eligible for participation.

For information about eligibility and access, visit the [Follett Access page](#) on the FSU Student Business Services site. Faculty interested in becoming a part of the program can contact the [FSU Bookstore Manager](#).

## Students Get Free Access to Software



[FSU's virtual computer lab](#) (myFSUvLab) offers free access to a range of computer applications for students, faculty, staff, and departments. Available software programs include Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access) and the Adobe suite (Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator, Acrobat). Also offered are apps for math, statistics and data analysis, and programming (e.g., MATLAB, SAS, IBM SPSS, NVivo).

The virtual lab includes these features:

- 24/7 online access to over 30 specialty programs and apps
- Operation on Windows, Mac, or mobile device using any web browser
- Easy-to-navigate interface for saving, printing, or transferring files across devices

To learn more, visit the [myFSUvLab](#) page. To access any of the apps, [log in to myFSUvLab](#).



## Signing On

The FSU Testing Center recently rolled out updated electronic signage in both the lobby and check-in area of UCC-1100 to better inform students of our testing policies.

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## CANVAS FYI



## Filtering SpeedGrader by Student Groups

Recent updates to the Canvas Gradebook will help improve the grading process for instructors and teaching assistants. In September, a Gradebook feature was implemented that provides the option to filter SpeedGrader by student groups and not just by course sections. This option may make grading easier for teaching assistants, particularly those grading for large enrollment courses who are assigned a specific subset of students that does not correspond to a specific course section or the whole course. You can read more about this update in our [support article](#).

Another Gradebook change occurred over the summer with the expansion of the assignment muting feature. Now called Grade Posting Policy, this feature gives instructors greater control over when assignment and assessment grades are released to students. Instructors have two Grade Posting Policy options – automatic posting and manual posting. For more information, please see our [support article](#). If you have questions about any of the Gradebook or SpeedGrader functions, you may [contact us](#) at 850-644-8004.

## Conferences Update and Breakout Rooms

Canvas Conferences, which integrate with [BigBlueButton](#), can be used for virtual lectures, student groups, or any event that requires synchronous interaction. BigBlueButton now uses HTML5 to run the application, which ensures a superior, more user-friendly environment. Updates to Conferences include a simplified screen layout, closed captions, and [breakout room functionality](#). With breakout rooms, instructors can create up to eight rooms at a time for students to share ideas in groups. By using these rooms, instructors encourage engagement among students, including small group discussion and collaborative work. Conferences can accommodate up to 100 concurrent users.

For more information on Canvas Conferences, please see our [support article](#). For questions, contact [ODL Technical Support](#) at 850-644-8004.

## Your Vote Can Help Improve Canvas



Have you ever wished you could mark a quiz as extra credit in Canvas? You can make your voice heard by [voting for this feature](#) to be integrated into the Canvas learning environment. Canvas encourages users to [submit feature ideas](#) on ways to enhance LMS functionality. Voting for and submitting feedback on these ideas via the [Canvas Community](#) is one of the best ways to improve Canvas for the FSU community.

To make voting easier, we've compiled the Canvas Community Feedback mailing list. This list recommends specific feature ideas to support within the Canvas Community. You can [subscribe to the list](#) and also check out our "Vote Up" recommendations for [August](#) and [September](#).

Additional feature ideas up for voting include:

- Create question banks in Word
- Allow grading of large classes in SpeedGrader
- Display essay responses to a quiz question on one screen for grading
- Designate notification settings by course
- Indicate multiple due dates for peer review assignments

## Release Notes

The September production release notes from Canvas describe updated features on the New Gradebook (student group filter) and New Quizzes (multiple-choice, individual-level feedback). Navigation menus have also been updated to improve accessibility. You can access the [complete release notes](#) on the Canvas Community page.

## TOOL TIME

### Tool Improves Testing Center Scheduling



The Exam Scheduler is part of a suite of new tools developed by the Office of Distance Learning to improve the FSU Testing Center experience for instructors and students.

Prior to the launch of the Exam Scheduler tool in Fall 2019, the Testing Center schedule was created manually. The automated Exam Scheduler provides more precise scheduling. The scheduler uses survey responses and live data to better anticipate Testing Center needs and availability. Having access to this information allows the Testing Center staff to adjust the number of available testing slots and reduce wait times for students. Eliminating the manual, labor-intensive scheduling process also frees up staff to provide enhanced Testing Center service across the board.

“This semester we began using an intelligent exam-scheduling system to manage traffic in the Testing Center,” said Dr. Joe Clark, Associate Director of Assessment and Testing. “This new system is part of a continuing effort to make the testing experience smoother for all students and to accommodate faculty needs for secure proctoring.”

For more information on scheduling exams with the Testing Center, please see our [support article](#). For questions about the Testing Center, please contact [testing@fsu.edu](mailto:testing@fsu.edu).

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## TECHNOLOGY TIPS

### Support Articles

Check out the latest articles from our [Canvas Support Center](#).

- [How to check when your Kaltura media item was created](#)
- [New Canvas updates for instructors](#)
- [How to use a Grade Posting Policy in the Gradebook](#)

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## ODDS & ENDS

### Conferences and Events

- [4th International Day of Action Against Contract Cheating](#), October 16, 2019. This day is a call for institutions of higher education to encourage a culture of academic integrity.
- [Open Access Week](#), October 21–27, 2019. This weeklong event is an opportunity for the academic community to learn about the benefits of Open Access.



- [National Distance Learning Week](#), November 4–8, 2019. The U.S. Distance Learning Association sponsors a weeklong series of webinars.
  - [Online Learning Consortium \(OLC\) Accelerate](#), November 19–22, 2019, in Orlando, Florida. Onsite and virtual registration are available as OLC Accelerate celebrates its silver anniversary.
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## LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

We are eager to receive your feedback on what you would like to see in future issues of the newsletter, so please [send us your suggestions](#) about ways ODL can better serve you.

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