From Knowledge Curator to Knowledge Creator: Academic Libraries and Open Access Textbook Publishing

Fiona Salisbury, Brianna L. Julien, Birgit Loch, Steven Chang & Louise Lexis

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Fiona Salisbury
Library, Western Sydney University, Penrith, NSW, Australia

Brianna L. Julien
Department of Microbiology, Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology, School of Agriculture, Biomedicine and Environment, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Birgit Loch
Faculty of Science, Agriculture, Business and Law, University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia; and La Trobe University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Steven Chang
Library, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Louise Lexis
Department of Microbiology, Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology, School of Agriculture, Biomedicine and Environment, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Access to learning resources is not always affordable or equitable for students in higher education, and high-cost resources, which are commonly prescribed in course reading lists, create barriers for learning. Incorporating open access textbooks in reading lists responds to these issues. Academic librarians' expertise in curating, organizing, and disseminating knowledge coupled with a long-held passion for open access means that they are well positioned to drive partnerships with academic colleagues that prioritize the use and creation of open educational resources resulting in resources that are accessible, high quality, flexible, and appropriate to support learning in all modes (online, blended, face-to-face).

Description of program/service: At La Trobe University Library, a commitment to openness provided a starting point for rethinking the role of the library as a publisher of open educational resources. The La Trobe eBureau is an Australian academic library publishing initiative designed to produce high-quality, peer-reviewed open textbooks by La Trobe University authors for La Trobe University courses. Situating the library as an open textbook publisher in partnership with academics improves the affordability of course resources, the

student online learning experience, and the visibility of academic outputs and, importantly, has impact and value across higher education institutions.

Next steps: This article shares reflections and challenges from the perspective of eBureau authors and library staff. The Library will continue to build on the success of eBureau collaborations and look more broadly to enact the future role of academic libraries in sustainable open textbook publishing within La Trobe University and across the higher education sector.

Keywords: open access textbooks, library publishing, librarian/academic partnership, open educational resources

INTRODUCTION

Openness is a familiar concept and a core value in academic libraries. The curated print and digital collections of academic libraries are open to the university and wider communities for knowledge discovery, access, research, and learning, notwithstanding limitations based on format, copy availability, or license conditions. Despite a long-held library commitment to openness, access to print and digital textbooks on course reading lists is not always affordable or equitable for students in higher education; unavoidable access restrictions can be problematic for students accessing reading list resources via their library, and, for many, the purchase of digital or print textbooks is not an option. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are particularly burdened by the high price of commercially published textbooks and the expectation to buy prescribed textbooks (Jenkins et al., 2020). Educational resources that are digital, openly accessible, and free for all students resolve these issues and offer a range of benefits beyond student cost savings: for example, first day access to readings and greater flexibility for academics to adapt and customize materials to suit their teaching approach. Academic librarians have a critical role in ensuring that these benefits are realized for all stakeholders: students, academics, and librarians alike.

Open educational resources (OER) are defined as learning materials that have been released under an intellectual property license permitting their free use or repurposing by others (UNESCO Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs, 2019) and include textbooks, videos, interactive learning objects, multimedia, and other types of course resources and software (Butcher, 2015). The focus of this paper is on textbooks as a subset of OER. Our definition of open textbooks includes books prescribed for the study of a particular subject, which, like OER in general, are published online via an open license, making them freely available to students and allowing academics to modify and adapt content to suit their teaching by engaging in the open practices commonly referred to as the 5R activities (i.e., retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute; see Wiley [n.d.]).

Commitment to open textbooks is often a first step in embracing open educational practices (OEP). The practice of finding, adopting, adapting, and creating open textbooks ideally

involves institutional partnering and leads to new models for education in which learners and educators retain, reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute content together to shape knowledge (Hilton et al., 2010; Ehlers, 2011; Bossu et al., 2014). As key institutional collaborators in this endeavor, academic librarians can leverage their expertise in curating, organizing, and disseminating knowledge to partner with academic colleagues to adopt, adapt, and create open textbooks. This paper adds to the growing evidence that such partnerships produce quality open textbooks that are accessible, flexible, and appropriate to support learning in all modes (online, blended, face-to-face). However, new collaborations come with new challenges, not least of which is how to integrate and sustain the library as publisher of open textbooks with traditional library collection practices and roles.

With a growing impetus in the Australian higher education environment to support open textbook creation, many academic libraries are looking beyond their role as knowledge curators to new roles as advocates and creators of open textbooks. In Australia, the challenges of COVID-19 and the increasing shift to online learning has led to a greater sense that the time is ripe for boldly advancing the open textbook agenda within and across institutions. In this paper, we concentrate on the creation of open textbooks as a partnership between the library as a publisher and academics as authors. To demonstrate the advantages of this approach, we present the La Trobe eBureau (eBureau) as a case study. As academics and library staff collaborating on eBureau publishing initiatives, we explore why a role for the library in open textbook publishing makes sense, given that this work sits at the intersection of our core shared values, complementary expertise, and existing partnerships between librarians, academics, and students. In describing the eBureau business model and production process, we use examples to demonstrate the impact and value of the eBureau textbooks in terms of access and affordability for students, flexible and tailored Australian content, and visibility of La Trobe University authors. There are many advantages of academics and library staff coming together to create and publish open textbooks, but there are also many challenges. For example, we have grappled with issues such as raising awareness, sustaining a publication pipeline, building capability for new library roles, and incorporating content creation as part of academic workload. As part of a new generation of Australian academics and library staff collaborating to produce open textbooks, in this paper, we draw on our experience and the issues we have encountered to offer reflections on the implications of initiatives such as the eBureau for future open textbook publishing practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The textbook access and affordability dilemma

Textbooks are still considered by academics to be an essential educational resource, and they are readily prescribed in reading lists (Pitt et al., 2020). Allen and Seaman's (2016) survey of

3000 United States academics demonstrated that 98% of courses required a textbook or other non-textbook material as part of their prescribed readings and that most prescribed textbooks (69%) were only available in print format. When selecting course resources, academics considered the cost to students, quality of the content, and ease of accessibility. Even though open textbooks meet these criteria just as well as print textbooks, only 5.3% of courses overall used an OER, and 10% of large-enrollment undergraduate courses adopted an open textbook.

With textbooks continuing to be a staple item in course reading lists, it follows that textbook access and cost will influence students' academic experience and success. Globally, the cost of textbooks is increasing well beyond inflation, and, consequently, students forego buying textbooks to fund basic living expenses (Jenkins et al., 2020; Walsh, 2020). The cost of buying textbooks contributes to students' financial hardship and dissatisfaction and, inevitably, negatively influences student educational choices (Hendricks et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2017; Jhangiani et al., 2018; Pitt et al., 2020). The ramifications of textbook affordability alone are reason enough to prompt a change of approach.

A reading list that includes a mix of open textbooks and digital commercial textbooks with unlimited access via the library is likely to eliminate student financial outlay, ensure equitable access, and improve the student experience. However, putting this combination in place is not simple: libraries cannot always provide an adequate number of digital licenses for prescribed textbooks, academics cannot always easily identify appropriate open textbooks or other OER, some core textbooks are only available in print or via student-only digital licenses, and students cannot always afford to buy a print or digital copy. There is a plethora of clear evidence and compelling arguments that unrestricted access to open textbooks mitigates student financial hardship, contributes to student retention, and does not harm student performance (Colvard et al., 2018; Nusbaum et al., 2020). And yet open textbooks are not routinely prescribed in reading lists; although not insurmountable, the challenges in transforming reading lists cannot be underestimated. Open textbooks need to be part of a new holistic approach to reading lists and supported by professional development and capability building.

Open textbook benefits, challenges, and perceptions

Student perceptions of the quality of open textbooks is positive (Hilton, 2020; Clinton-Lisell et al., 2021). Students appreciate the cost savings, accessibility, convenience, and portability (R. S. Jhangiani & S. Jhangiani, 2017; Julien et al., 2018; Grissett & Huffman, 2019; Beile et al., 2020; Oelfke et al., 2021) afforded by open textbooks and the unique digital features such as multimedia and other interactive learning aids (Jhangiani et al., 2016). Whereas most studies show open textbooks to be as good as or slightly better than traditional textbooks in terms of student learning (Luo et al., 2020), there is a small amount of contradictory evidence,

with some students reporting problems with the credibility, quality, and usability of open textbook content (Bliss et al., 2013; Belikov & Bodily, 2016).

A number of studies that compare traditional textbooks with open textbooks have demonstrated that open textbooks provide a cost-saving advantage without compromising on resource quality and student academic performance (Hilton & Laman, 2012; Jhangiani et al., 2018; Clinton & Khan, 2019; Engler & Shedlosky-Shoemaker, 2019; Oelfke et al., 2021) and result in equity of access to education (Lagoze et al., 2015). Open textbooks also offer flexibility, address the gender gap in the authors represented in reading lists (Harris et al., 2020), and diversify content to achieve social justice and equitable education (Lambert, 2018; Lambert and Fadel, 2022).

When academics do not actively adopt, adapt, or create open textbooks, it is often due to lack of awareness (Allen & Seaman, 2016; Bond et al., 2021), negative impressions of open textbook quality, lack of time and the perceived amount of effort required to create or adapt content, and lack of incentives (Todorinova & Wilkinson, 2020; Bond et al., 2021; Lantrip & Ray, 2021; Oelfke et al., 2021). Even when there is awareness of the benefits, concerns remain about discoverability, quality, uncertainty about copyright, accessibility and technology required by students, available time to create and adapt, and lack of institutional support and academic recognition (Crossick, 2015; Jhangiani et al., 2016; Luo et al., 2020; Oelfke et al., 2021). Luo et al. (2020) stress that sustainable open textbook adoption by academics is most likely where there is institutional support to integrate open textbooks into subjects and courses. In universities where OER is a priority but engagement is low, policy development is a tactic that supports awareness raising and uptake of open textbooks (Schneider, 2017; Stevens et al., 2017). OER policy initiatives motivate educators to adopt, adapt, and create open textbooks by providing incentives, resources, and training and, in doing so, set the scene for positioning the library as publisher of open textbooks in partnership with academics (Walsh, 2020).

Concerns about the quality of open textbooks are not substantiated by the evidence about retention and learning outcomes. Zero-cost textbook degree programs that use open textbooks have resulted in increased student retention and at least equivalent learning outcomes in comparison with courses with traditional textbooks (Fischer et al., 2015; Hamilton & Jacobs, 2017; Engler & Shedlosky-Shoemaker, 2019; Grissett & Huffman, 2019; Luo et al., 2020). For academic libraries considering open textbook publishing, issues of quality also raise questions about whether libraries have the capacity to expand services and build expertise in editorial and peer-review processes, marketing, and distribution to match the quality processes that an academic may expect from a commercial publisher. The critical question posed by librarians is whether libraries can create value locally and maintain a sustainable business model for open textbook publishing (Gilman, 2014).

Library-led open textbook publishing

In the tradition of Western universities, it has been commonly accepted that "a 'good' library was a 'big' library, because it assembled locally a large part of the scholarly and cultural record for prospecting by students and researchers" (Dempsey & Malpas, 2018, p. 69). By providing open access (OA) publishing services, libraries are breaking with tradition and "blurring the line between publisher and platform" (Adema & Stone, 2017, p. 3). Dempsey & Malpas (2018) identify this shift as trading an outside-in collections model, "where the library is buying or licensing materials from external providers and making them accessible to a local audience," for an inside-out collections model, where the library supports creation of "resources which may be unique to an institution, and the audience is both local and external" (Dempsey & Malpas, 2018, p. 74). Although it has been argued that libraries have long been publishers of information (Harboe-Ree, 2007; Okerson & Holzman, 2015), both in their own right or in collaboration with university presses, the inside-out collections model moves libraries along a continuum that begins with curation and preservation, moves to creation, production, and open publishing, and ultimately leads to OEP.

In 2007, Harboe-Ree underscored the opportunities available for academic libraries if they are willing to embrace a role in scholarly publishing in the digital environment, and she highlights early initiatives in Australia that have established new business models for open publishing. Library OA publishing of research outputs created a "knowledge sharing platform, extending beyond the library to other administrative departments and creating a community of practice" (Ginther et al., 2017, p. 137), and the same possibilities are being realized by libraries that embark on open textbook publishing. With the increasing number of libraries delivering publishing services, there are a variety of business and service models to learn from. For example, the Oregon State University (OSU) 2013 open textbook publishing initiative involved three partners: OSU Libraries, OSU Press, and the emerging technologies unit of the university (Sutton and Chadwell, 2014). The pilot program resulted in the creation of four open textbooks, and almost a decade later, this has expanded to a collection of 35 titles. Similarly, Milne Open Textbooks (Milne Library Publishing, n.d.) provides the tools and platform for academics to collaborate on open textbooks. This initiative provides a publishing workflow, connects academics to a community of open textbook authors, prepares manuscripts for online publication or print on demand, and distributes open textbooks via the Milne Open Textbooks website. Originally an initiative of State University of New York (SUNY) Libraries, it produces open textbooks authored and peer-reviewed by SUNY academics and supported by the SUNY libraries (Pitcher, 2014). More libraries have subsequently become involved, resulting in 38 open textbooks published since 2015 (Milne Library Publishing, n.d.). Academic libraries involved in open textbook publishing are redefining publishing: the "consummate

library publisher is a change agent, loud and clear, affirming and announcing its agenda as access-prone" (Vandegrift & Bolick, 2014, p. 114).

A major challenge for libraries leading OA publishing initiatives is the defining of new roles and building additional skills (Pitcher, 2016). Harboe-Ree (2007) was circumspect about whether librarians have the skills to sustain new publishing initiatives. But librarians' willingness to experiment with OA publishing has led to an expansion of services, building publishing expertise, developing new skills in author services, employing non-library professionals, and drawing on existing academic partnerships to get open textbook publishing initiatives off the ground (Adema & Schmidt, 2010; Mangiafico, 2014). Some of the main barriers to OER use identified by Luo et al. (2020), such as understanding copyright and licensing, discoverability, storage, and retrieval, are the skills that librarians, as seasoned institutional collaborators, bring to open textbook initiatives. These skills and new skills related to author services form the basis for a shift to viewing library publishing in its entirety as a core competency that is incorporated in professional development programs and resource allocations. Academic libraries willing to pursue open publishing as a core service for the good of their communities are shifting resources to the production, distribution, and marketing needs of authors (Gilman, 2014). By viewing library publishing as a priority for advancing openness in teaching and learning, "libraries can actively facilitate and support…book publishing and, thereby, better serve their patrons—the scholars—from both sides of the supply chain: as readers and as authors" (Adema & Schmidt, 2010, p. 40).

Australian open textbook publishing

In the Australian higher education landscape, several academic libraries actively participate and lead open textbook publishing in their institutions. The Australian National University (ANU) Library has advanced open textbook publishing in Australia since 2003 in response to the need to reduce costs for students, increase dissemination of the ANU scholarly output, shift the restrictive nature of traditional academic publishing, and experiment with innovative business models in the digital landscape (Missingham & Kanellopoulos, 2013). The ANU Press, which is the responsibility of the library, provides a multitude of production services (e.g., editing, indexing, copyright management, marketing, distribution, and promotional activities such as book launches). In the first decade of operation, there were 60 titles published annually and 5 million user downloads. This progress is largely due to institutional acceptance of OA publishing and policy, a streamlined publishing process, and efficient collaboration between academics, the library, university leadership, and external networks, and it has been an inspiration for other libraries (Harboe-Ree, 2007). The ANU Press was in the vanguard of what could be considered a first wave of open textbook publishing in Australia, and, following their lead, several libraries established collaborations with their university press to publish open textbooks and books,

including the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Monash University, and the University of Adelaide (Table 1). Although not all books published by libraries in the first wave may be openly licensed, all are free to read, which points to a major change in practice.

Years active	Library and/or university press	Number of open textbooks and/or open access books published
2003–	Australian National University	679
2004–	University of Technology Sydney	54
2005–	Monash University	63
2009–2018	University of Adelaide	80

Table 1. First Wave of Open Textbooks and Book Publishing by Australian University Libraries and/or University Presses (Based on desktop review conducted in January 2022)

The second wave of open textbook publishing in Australia started in 2017 and, at the start of 2022, involved at least seven libraries (Table 2). Where publishing initiatives are part of university press operations and include the publication of scholarly monographs, output is much higher (e.g., the University of Sydney). The benchmark in terms of output rests with the ANU: an indication of potential, the importance of institutional policy and advocacy, and a robust and institutionally supported business model. Not all libraries in the second wave have the backing of institutional policy to underpin "high-level support, advocacy, greater awareness raising" (Stevens et al., 2017, p. 255), and there is variation in the open licenses applied depending on author and institutional approaches. Although more universities are publishing open textbooks, the majority do not have OA policies or plans that promote OER or support OEP, and even where institutional policy is in place, it is not necessarily backed by well-established sector-wide policy (Stagg et al., 2018).

Years active	Library and/or university press	Number of open textbooks and/or open access books published
2017–	La Trobe University	12
2019–	University of Sydney	53
2020–	Charles Darwin University	5
2020–	University of Southern Queensland	13
2021–	Queensland University of Technology	1
2021–	James Cook University	4
2021–	University of Queensland	8

Table 2. Second Wave of Open Textbooks and Book Publishing by Australian University Libraries and/or University Presses (Based on desktop review conducted in January 2022)

What is clear from Tables 1 and 2 is that, whereas most initiatives are at the shallow end of the pool in terms of the scale of their output (with exception of the ANU, which contributes 70% of total items listed in Tables 1 and 2), the sum of these libraries' collective output ushers in new momentum: a growing critical mass of content that foregrounds Australian authors' voices and Australian perspectives. There is also an energy in the increasing number of libraries active in open textbook publishing, which means more diverse open textbooks for course reading lists, more academic and library staff partnering to adopt, adapt, and create open textbooks, and, ultimately, more equitable education that does not put the burden of the cost of resources on students.

Building critical mass

The global pool of open textbooks and books available to be adopted and adapted is hard to estimate and always increasing, but there were over 48,890 peer-reviewed OA books from 682 publishers listed on the Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB; DOAB Foundation, 2022) in January 2022, indicating that this international pool is deep and wide. Of the Australian publishers listed in Tables 1 and 2, a selection of titles from the ANU (633 titles), UTS (51 titles), Monash University (17 titles), the University of Sydney (6 titles), and the University of Adelaide (69 titles) are included in DOAB. As discussed earlier, one of the key barriers for academics in adopting or adapting open textbooks is finding out what is available, and the primary aim of DOAB is to increase discoverability of OA books. DOAB is not the only directory available: for example, in January 2022, the Open Textbook Library Directory (Centre for Open Education, 2022) included 983 titles, the BCcampus open textbook collection (BCcampus, 2022) included 385 titles, and the Pressbooks Directory (Pressbooks, 2022) included over 3000 titles from more than 110 Pressbooks publishing networks. Even though there is some overlap between directories, the developing critical mass of OA books that are discoverable in directories, search engines, and library catalogues brings into clear view the importance of open textbook use and creation as a partnership activity in which "academic disciplinary expertise is combined with expertise in content sourcing, learning design, resource development, materials licensing" (Butcher, 2015, p. 38). It also raises key questions about issues of scalability and sustainability for library OA publishers. Meetz and Boczar (2022) argue that these issues cannot be addressed without dedicated library staff or reallocating the time of existing library staff to deliver on aspirations to grow critical mass.

When it comes to capacity for building critical mass, perhaps the most striking difference between Australia and other jurisdictions in the international open textbook ecology is a lack of government-funded initiatives such as the California Comeback Plan Zero-Textbook-Cost Degree program (Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, 2021), philanthropically

funded initiatives such as BCcampus, or affiliations of higher education institutions such as OpenStax, the Open Textbook Library, and Milne Open Textbooks. The business models of these initiatives are designed to provide author grants and communities of practice; facilitate discovery, adoption, adaption, creation, and distribution of open textbooks; support collaborative open textbook projects; and provide catalogue records for libraries to download and incorporate in their own catalogues. In North America, such models have been successful in ultimately reducing costs for students, with an estimated $1.2 billion in savings for students (Falk, 2020). Many Australian academic libraries are joining international networks such as the Open Textbook Network to support and build capacity for leading institutional awareness, engagement, and integrated approaches for open textbook implementation at their institutions (Colla, 2020). Local networks and interest groups such as the Australasian Open Educational Practice Special Interest Group are well-established (see https://oepoz.wordpress.com/) and importantly play a key role in bringing practitioners together to discuss, collaborate, and share key issues of interest. Likewise, the Open Textbook Initiative (see https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/oer/) is an Australian academic library network that connects librarians and academics, facilitates the discovery of open textbooks, fosters the adoption and adaption of open textbooks, provides tools and resources, and encourages collaboration across institutions (Ponte et al., 2021). Its Student Savings Calculator makes it easy for librarians and academics to estimate student savings when open textbooks replace print textbooks, and institutions that have used the calculator demonstrate that 19 textbook adoptions have achieved student savings of $271,000.

The second wave of open textbook publishing in Australia has set the scene for increased networking, collaboration, and advocacy and has enriched the national open textbook ecology by providing an environment where institutional open textbook publishing services such as the eBureau can flourish and contribute to building a national critical mass and collaboration across the sector.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE

La Trobe University context

La Trobe University (La Trobe) is a multi-campus university serving the need for higher education in both urban and rural areas often classified as low socioeconomic. Over 38,000 students are enrolled, supported by approximately 3000 staff. La Trobe was established in 1964 to "broaden participation in higher education in Melbourne's north, and later, in regional Victoria" (La Trobe University, 2022). From the beginning, La Trobe has had a strong focus on social justice, inclusiveness, equity, and diversity. La Trobe's commitment to equity and diversity coupled with a keen strategic focus on blended learning are conducive to realizing the benefits of open textbooks; it is an inspiring starting point for establishing library-led OA publishing and building support for open textbooks.

The La Trobe eBureau

In 2016, the catalyst for thinking about open textbooks at La Trobe was a university strategy to increase online and blended teaching. In an online and blended environment, the Library's belief is that equitable and free access to prescribed textbooks in digital format is a fundamental expectation for all students, regardless of background, campus, or attendance mode, and this perspective was the starting point for establishing the eBureau as a Library-led initiative. Digital textbooks are essential for creating an engaging student experience in an online (and blended) learning environment. At that time, however, less than 40% of reading list items were available in digital format. Library staff were also aware of commercially published La Trobe–authored textbooks that were being used in La Trobe courses and that were not available in digital format. Additionally, Library staff were conscious of trends in library-led open textbook publishing in Australia and internationally and had a strong resolve to reduce the cost of textbooks for students. The time was right to develop a sustainable open textbook publishing model to support academics and students. Our conversations with academics uncovered concerns ranging from the cost of commercially published resources (for the university and for students) to being locked into deals with specific providers. Whereas differing views also emerged as to the feasibility of academics developing their own open textbooks, the need for support and a coordinated approach was commonly identified as critical in reducing barriers to more widespread use of open textbooks. Academics told us that the quality open textbooks needed to be fit for purpose, easy to use, customizable, and easily integrated into the curriculum. Our proposal for the eBureau was designed to respond to these needs and provide a pathway for academic authors interested in publishing open textbooks to replace or complement commercial digital textbooks in reading lists.

The eBureau proposal outlined a strategic and coordinated approach to open textbook publishing with key objectives to do the following:

- Provide free and digital access to textbooks for students
- Improve awareness of open textbooks and the opportunities they present for online and blended learning
- Provide services for La Trobe academics to author and publish open textbooks
- Provide services to support expansion of online course delivery
- Promote La Trobe open textbooks
- Promote La Trobe open textbook authors

Our proposal to contribute to OEP at La Trobe through open textbook publishing was successful, and the La Trobe Library was awarded a major institutional Digital Learning Strategy

Innovation Grant in 2016 to first develop proof of concept for creating open textbooks that support the curriculum and, second, create a new business model and guidelines for publishing open textbooks at La Trobe. To achieve these objectives, the library team collaborated with La Trobe academics who were looking for alternatives to commercial publishers, were committed to OA, and were inspired by the possibilities inherent in publishing open textbooks.

Project outcomes

The initial eBureau project resulted in the publication of two open textbooks in 2017, which were authored by La Trobe academics, and the establishment of the eBureau as a service for La Trobe academic authors. The eBureau's mission was to invest in the creation and development of quality, peer-reviewed open textbooks at zero cost to the student: in other words, open textbooks authored by La Trobe academics for La Trobe courses. The eBureau established the library as an open textbook publisher, which provides authors with publishing infrastructure and author services provided or facilitated by library staff. The business model supports the following:

- Online and blended learning
- Individual or collaborative creation
- Creation and/or adaptions

and services include the following:

- Open textbooks published with a Creative Commons license
- Textbooks published in two portable document format (PDF) formats (i.e., high and low resolution)
- Cover design
- Peer review
- Copy and structural editing
- Marketing and promotion
- Image copyright costs
- Indexing in the La Trobe library catalogue and other search engines

Creating a strong design and identity for the eBureau was an important aspect of increasing recognition of open textbook publishing among La Trobe academics and creating an engaging design for students. Professional book designer team Evi Oetomo and Daniel New created a logo (Figure 1) and a template for covers and internal pages. In launching the eBureau, we wanted the eBureau branding to be prominent on the publication covers (Figure 2) and well-matched to both iconic images and strong colors.

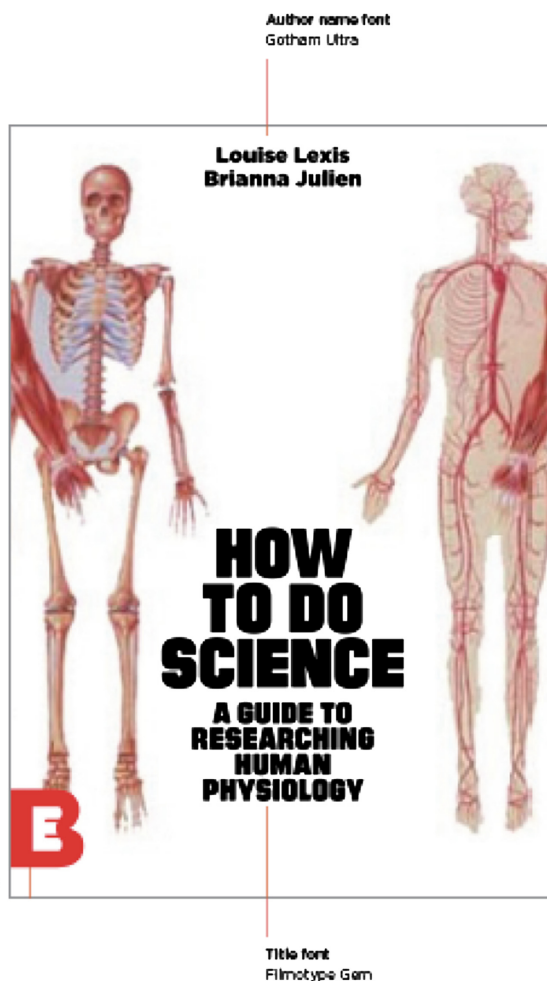**Figure 1.** La Trobe eBureau Logo Design

Figure 2. Identity Kit Cover Template Guidelines

The eBureau design identity kit was developed by the design team to ensure a distinctive brand, and this continues to be applied consistently on publications, promotional material, and the website (see https://library.latrobe.edu.au/ebureau/).

The La Trobe eBureau publication process

The eBureau publication process begins when an informal expression of interest (essentially a pitch) is received by the library from prospective authors. Author interest is generated through a combination of librarian outreach efforts, calls for proposals, and word of mouth. After consultation, the initial expression of interest is fleshed out into a formal author proposal covering the following:

- Aims and scope
- Target audience
- Courses and/or subjects in which the open textbook will be used
- How the project aims to leverage the benefits of OA

Proposals are accepted or rejected based on whether they meet the following criteria:

1. La Trobe University lead author
2. Intention to be used as a learning and teaching resource for a specific La Trobe course/subject code(s)
3. Author(s) must have copyright of the manuscript (i.e., it is their work)

These criteria ensure that new eBureau publications continue to reflect our original aim to produce open textbooks by La Trobe authors for La Trobe courses. Meeting these criteria aligns eBureau publications with the La Trobe curriculum while being adaptable for other courses regardless of institution. Although the lead author must be a La Trobe academic, co-authors from other institutions are welcome partners and are encouraged.

The longest phase of development is the manuscript writing process. During this time, the eBureau team and authors meet regularly to discuss progress. The aim of these conversations is to provide updates, manage project timelines, solve problems, and incubate ideas about the project. Authors typically submit their manuscript as a Microsoft Word document, which is then ingested into Adobe InDesign for formatting, design, and publishing in PDF format. Adobe's software was originally chosen because of the high degree of control, precision, and flexibility it gives over layout, aesthetics, and design. A limitation of InDesign is that

it tends to be better suited to creating PDFs rather than more universally accessible Web formats such as Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and ePub. Consequently, a pilot is currently underway to trial PressBooks as an alternative book publishing platform capable of producing outputs in a wide range of accessible formats.

The scope of professional work that underpins the eBureau publishing service has required extending library staff skills in author services, publication design, and production (e.g., InDesign) and drawing on expertise across several Library teams. For example, publishing open textbooks has relied heavily on the advice and guidance of the university copyright advisor, who is based in the library, and, as a result, all staff involved have increased their knowledge of copyright. A snapshot of the volume of work undertaken by eBureau staff for our first five publications indicates that over 550 images were checked for copyright compliance (Figure 3). This is largely due to the subject matter of our early publications that required photos and images of artworks to support content but also indicates the level of expertise that is required.
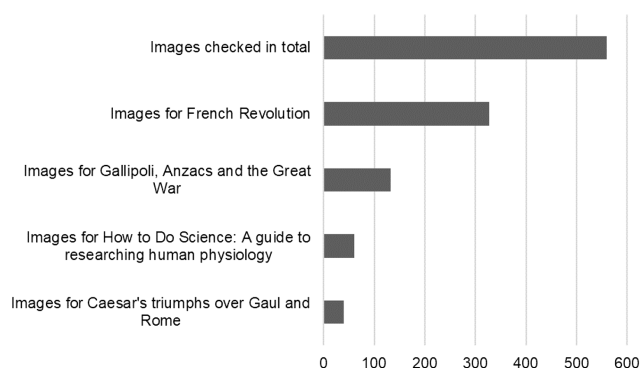
Figure 3. A Snapshot of the Volume of Copyright Checking Undertaken By eBureau Staff for Early Publications

Once the eBureau became more established, in 2019, a coordinator of open education and scholarship position was created within the Library's Digital Discovery Team to focus on progressing our open textbook publishing activity. The coordinator has oversight of eBureau operations, coordinates the publishing process from author engagement to publication, and works with senior learning librarians to establish partnerships with academics. In addition, part of the role of one of the library Digital Discovery Officers is to facilitate design, production, operations, and author liaison for each book project. The publication process can be divided into five stages: author engagement, manuscript content, manuscript design, final editing, and publication. For a concise breakdown of each stage, see Figure 4.

AUTHOR ENGAGEMENT

eBureau staff:

- meet with author to determine suitability of book, explain contractual obligations
- draft author agreement

Author:

- brings idea for book to support La Trobe students to eBureau
- signs author agreement
- delivers manuscript

MANUSCRIPT CONTENT

eBureau staff:

- source and engage editor, negotiate agreement (liaise with Legal Services)
- arranges peer review of manuscript
- review copyright requirements for images, audio, video, text
- purchases images
- negotiates agreement for use of images and other resources
- provide recommendations about permissions and text for attribution

Editor:

- edits manuscript – structural and copy editing

Peer reviewer:

- provides feedback, suggestions on manuscript using template

MANUSCRIPT DESIGN

eBureau staff:

- source and engage designer, negotiate agreement (liaise with Legal Services)
- provide designer with eBureau identity kit, edited manuscript, images, videos
- reviews and suggests feedback on design

Designer:

- creates and refines design for book
- finalises publication
- provides to eBureau:
  - InDesign files
  - high and low resolution PDF files

FINAL EDITING

eBureau staff:

- checks and approves edits
- checks: permissions are authorised for any images etc, attributions are correct, layout, typos
- returns manuscript to editor for final changes

Editor:

- makes final changes

Author:

- checks and approves edits

PUBLICATION

eBureau staff:

- creates imprint page
- adds ISBN
- final checks on manuscript
- publishes textbook to eBureau site

Editor:
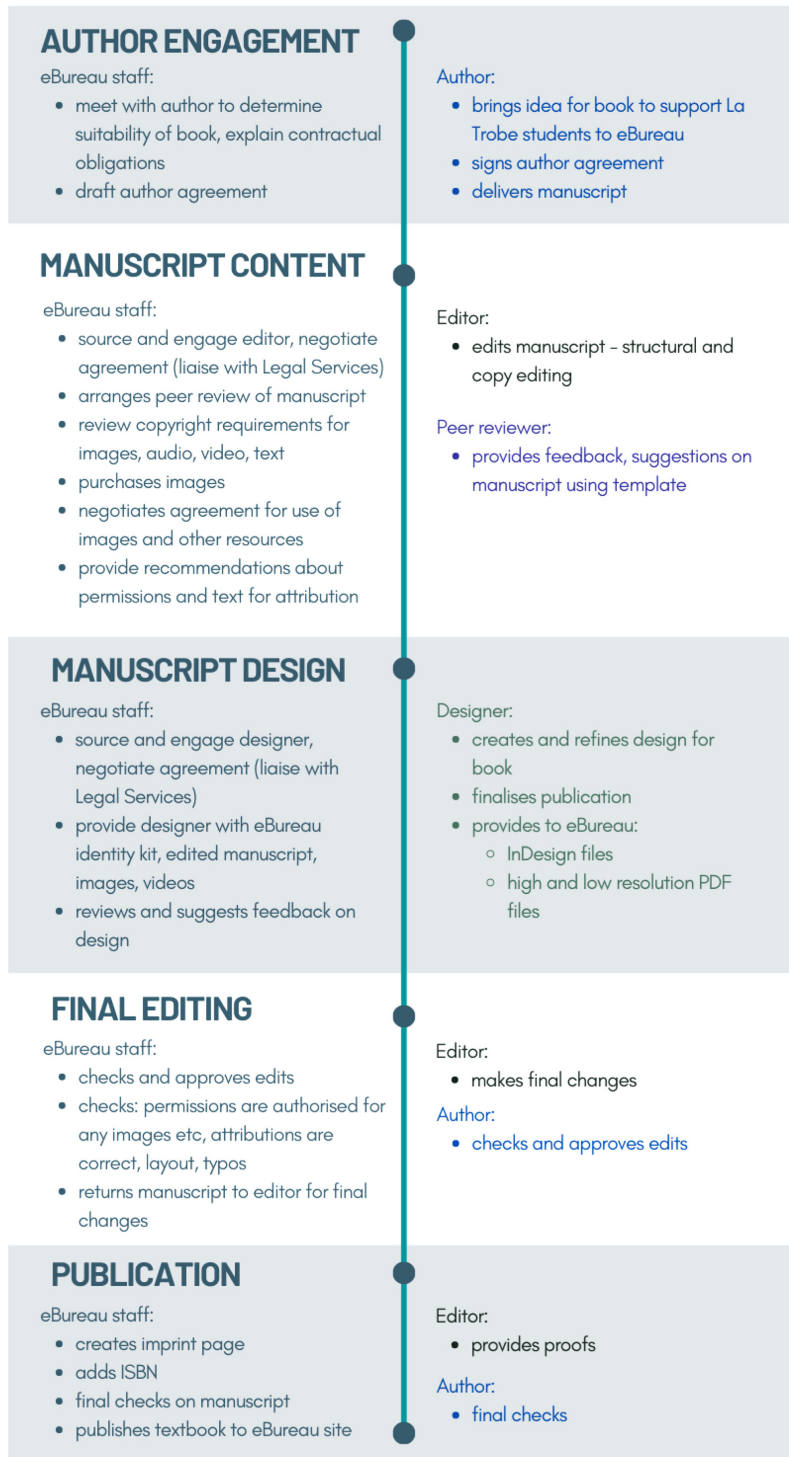
- provides proofs

Author:

- final checks

Figure 4. Overview of eBureau Publishing Process

As Crossick (2015) argues, the business of OA is not free, and the eBureau publication process includes engaging professional designers and editors as required, as well as facilitating peer review, including paying an honorarium to recognize peer review as scholarly labor. For us, investing in these external services is about quality production values, and our rationale was that high-quality publication would lead to increased use of eBureau publications in courses and reading lists and would also maximize student engagement.

Once all checks and proofs are completed, the final product is published on the eBureau website, complete with a digital object identifier (DOI) and International Standard Book Number (ISBN), and available to be viewed or downloaded. La Trobe students usually access eBureau books through the library reading list system via the learning management system associated with their courses. In order to facilitate international discoverability, publications are also deposited into La Trobe's institutional repository (see https://opal.latrobe.edu.au/) and indexed in the Library's catalogue (see https://www.latrobe.edu.au/library), as well as the National Library of Australia (via TROVE, see https://trove.nla.gov.au/).

The post-publication stage justifies its own phase of planning and implementation, and we have recognized that publication is one project milestone among many, rather than the end of the journey. A comprehensive communications plan for each open textbook project provides the scaffolding for a growing range of post-publication activities such as online book launches, targeted messaging, and engagement through mailing lists or channels related to a specific academic discipline and open scholarship communities more broadly. This advocacy and promotion to academics has resulted in eBureau publications being included as recommended or prescribed readings beyond the courses they were created for.

Evaluation of the impact and value of the La Trobe eBureau

Even with only 12 titles since 2017, eBureau publications are making a difference to students and academics. To measure the impact and value of the eBureau, we have reviewed access statistics, student savings, adoption at other institutions, and student perspectives.

Access

The eBureau homepage attracted over 80,000 hits from its inception to January 2022. More specifically, the level of access to eBureau textbooks is measured by number of downloads and shown in Table 3. Low-resolution files are more commonly downloaded, suggesting that file size is a consideration for eBureau users. More detailed access data, not shown here, indicate downloads across all continents except Antarctica, with most downloads in Australia. Perhaps

eBureau title	Number of downloads of low-resolution version	Number of downloads of high-resolution version	Total
Caesar's triumphs over Gaul and Rome (Midford & Evans, 2017)*	75	24	99
Democracy in difference: debating key terms of gender, sexuality, race and identity (D'Cruz, 2020)	1,710	235	1,945
Don't cheat yourself: scenarios to clarify collusion confusion (Seaton, 2018)	293	81	374
Fighting language endangerment: community directed research on Sm'algyax (Coast Tsimshian) (Stebbins, 2020)	100	23	123
French revolution (Jones et al., 2018)	98	20	118
How to do science: a guide to researching human physiology (Lexis & Julien, 2017)	899	151	1,050
Key concepts in the humanities and social sciences (Midford et al., 2018)	195	35	230
Research and evidence in practice (Erickson et al., 2018)	12,409	2,272	14,681
Australian pulps, 1939-1959 (Kells, 2021)	126	55	181
The little cell who lost its way (Resai-Kashkooli & Leslie, 2019)	95	15	110
Total	1,600	2,911	18,911

* *Caesar's Triumphs* is unique in that we experimented with an HTML format option. This was more popular (44 downloads) than the high-resolution PDF (24 downloads) but not as well used as the low-resolution PDF (75 downloads).

HTML, Hypertext Markup Language.

Table 3. Download Statistics for eBureau Titles (2017–2021)

not surprisingly, after Australia, the countries with the highest number of downloads are the United States, Canada, England, and New Zealand.

Affordability and student savings

Access data (Table 3) and estimated student savings (Table 4) can be used to support promotional campaigns, motivate authors, and provide evidence of student engagement.

eBureau title—Subject/teaching period	Subject enrollment	Cost of commercial textbook	Potential student savings
How to do science: a guide to researching human physiology (Lexis & Julien, 2017) HBS3IRP/Semester 2 2020	100	$100	$10,000
How to do science: a guide to researching human physiology (Lexis & Julien, 2017) HBS3HPR/Semester 1 2020	120	$100	$12,000
Research and evidence in practice (Erickson et al., 2018) HLT2IEP/Semester 2 2020	1,879	$90	$169,110
Democracy in difference: debating key terms of gender, sexuality, race and identity (D'Cruz, 2020) GSD1SGI/Semester 1 2020	82	$66.00	$5,412
Key concepts in the humanities and social sciences (Midford et al., 2018) HUS1TEN/Semester 2 2020	110	$59.00	$6,490

Table 4. Potential Student Savings Resulting from Prescribing eBureau Textbooks in Subject Reading Lists in 2020

The student savings presented in Table 4 are estimates based on the average cost of textbooks in the relevant field. In these examples, the authors wrote the textbook because available commercial textbooks were inadequate or unavailable for the Australian context.

Adoption and adaption

eBureau textbooks are designed to be used in La Trobe courses, but, because they are OA, they have been accessed, adopted, and adapted at other institutions. *How to do science* (Lexis & Julien, 2017) has been adopted as a teaching resource in a range of disciplines at La Trobe and externally at the Australian Catholic University (ACU), University of Southern Queensland (USQ), Indiana University, Penn State University, and Ciputra University Medical School in Indonesia. Informal feedback from academic peers who have adopted this textbook indicates that they appreciate having a textbook that is specific to the physiology discipline, illustrates the journey toward becoming a scientist, and is easily accessed by students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. After using *How to do science* for several years, USQ colleagues have sought permission from the eBureau to adapt *How to do science* for their institutional context. The USQ biomedical lecturers will retain most of the content and build USQ-specific resources that will be embedded throughout the text. In line with this, the eBureau and the authors of *How to do science* are working with colleagues from La Trobe and the University of Melbourne on a version of the textbook that focuses on research in oral health and dentistry, and, with colleagues from Monash University and Victoria

University, on a textbook that focuses on research in pharmacology. For La Trobe authors, publication with the eBureau has opened these opportunities for collaboration with colleagues from other institutions.

Teaching staff from ACU highlighted the accessible and relatable nature of *How to do science* as it is being used in their biomedicine and exercise science courses: it helped students realize that being a scientist actually is a journey, and staff were "very grateful for such an easily-accessed, user-friendly resource especially so as many of our students are not well off" (L. Hurley, personal communication, August 25, 2021). *How to do science* has also received accolades from members of the US-based Human Anatomy and Physiology Society (HAPS), the largest society of human anatomy and physiology teaching professionals. HAPS President Emeriti commented: "Your online text is, simply, FANTASTIC…This is an exemplar text!" (V. O'Loughlin, personal communication, March 11, 2017) and "All I can say is exquisite. Writing, illustrations, scope, organization, clarity: an amazing work and a wonderful resource for students" (W. Perrotti, personal communication, March 12, 2017).

Research and evidence in practice (Erickson et al., 2018) is another example of an eBureau textbook that has been adopted as a teaching resource nationally and internationally. Most usage (80%) is within Australia, predominantly Melbourne, with use also in the UK and US, most notably at Victoria University and the University of Limerick (Ireland). This broad adoption complements the textbook's strong ongoing local usage at La Trobe, where more than 1500 students per semester use it as their sole prescribed text for a subject by the same name as the textbook. Its success has led to a commitment in 2022 to creating a second edition for use in 2023, with a focus on improving its cultural safety and adding content on First Nations research methods in health sciences.

Student experience

How do students perceive open textbooks? How do they judge the effectiveness of open textbooks relative to traditional textbooks: their rigor and coverage? What is their experience of the formats, structures, and other design features of open textbooks? Do they find them easy to use or frustrating? Evaluation of two eBureau textbooks provide empirical answers to these questions. *How to do science* was formally evaluated by students within a year of the book's release (Julien et al., 2018). A mixed-methods study design was used to determine student perceptions of digital textbooks and, specifically, *How to do science.* Students who had used the textbook in their coursework (108 students) were invited to complete a questionnaire composed of Likert scale questions and open-ended questions; 67 students completed the questionnaire. *How to do science* was rated as having high quality, usefulness, appeal, easy accessibility, and

simplicity of navigation. The study found that students preferred the open textbook to commercial print textbooks and found it effective in supporting their scientific learning and skill development. *Research and evidence in practice* was evaluated by 220 students and six expert evidence-based practice educators. Analysis of these evaluations indicated that students and educators viewed the content as high quality, interactive, and engaging while successfully achieving pedagogical goals (Erickson et al., 2018).

Although not specifically related to eBureau publications, student comments in our 2020 Library Undergraduate Survey reinforced the importance that students place on digital and free access to textbooks as essential to study and managing everyday financial commitments. This fortifies our resolve to advocate for open textbooks as part of reading lists. Student comments mirror the themes discussed earlier in relation to textbook access, affordability, and experience. For example:

> **Experience**
> *I am studying online and each subject provides required reading through the library. My study would not be possible without this. The Reading Lists feature has been incredibly helpful and important. The ability to download sections of required reading to access while offline is important to me.*
>
> Coursework postgraduate, Education

> *The only thing I would suggest is making sure all books that are on reading lists are accessible online to read.*
>
> Undergraduate, Health

> *Being forced to read digital textbooks during COVID-19 has forced me to transition away from hard copy books. I do enjoy the benefit of marking up the text within the digital book and using the search function to quickly find what I am looking for within a book. COVID-19 has forced me to transition to digital books, but I don't think it has negatively impacted my learning.*
>
> Coursework postgraduate, Education

> *Due to COVID-19, my physical use of the library is non-existent. Online, however, it has become even more essential to my studies than I give it credit for. Even though I prefer to use physical copies of books, the eBook library has come in clutch during these times. As has the scholarly article database.*
>
> Coursework postgraduate, Education

Affordability

The accessibility of online textbooks this year has been of high importance for my studies! Coming into semester 1, I wasn't in a financial place of being able to afford the textbooks, so having the ability to access them was fantastic for me!

Undergraduate, Science

The physical library was a great resource for me before COVID-19 for studying in groups; however, now I use the library to access books online that I cannot afford.

Undergraduate, Science

Having access to ebooks online for free makes the difference between passing and failing.

Undergraduate, Engineering

It's too expensive to HAVE to purchase texts you might rarely use but NEED for one part of the subject.

Undergraduate, Engineering

I am very grateful for such a wide range of resources at the touch of a finger! It's fantastic and so helpful. I am also very grateful that many of my books required for subjects are available online in the library as purchasing several books throughout the year can get very costly!

Undergraduate, Health

Access

Hopefully the library is able to obtain more copies of digital textbooks, to make it available for all students who may access it all at one time. Especially core textbooks in subjects, makes it difficult to keep up with notes when the textbook is not always easily accessible at any time.

Undergraduate, Science

Having access to online journal articles and ebooks especially has been so helpful while in lockdown. Occasionally there have been books that are hard copy only, which is frustrating.

Undergraduate, Social Sciences, Later year

Without the access to the ebooks, articles, etc., I would be unable to complete my assignments and would also be unable to study.

Undergraduate, Law

> *The biggest improvement would be access to more digital resources, or having a digital copy of more books and textbooks*
>
> <div align="right">Undergraduate, Education</div>

> *Sometimes ebooks are not available when I need them. I think more library books could be ebooks available online so study could be better facilitated.*
>
> <div align="right">Undergraduate, Health</div>

Determining the impact and value of open textbooks is a challenge for library staff new to open textbook publishing. The strength of our evaluation is that it uses a variety of measures to make the case for the benefits of open textbooks, across the institution and with individual academics as new creative partnerships are formed. In our experience, compelling arguments supported by data encourage academics to adopt, adapt, or create open textbooks to replace commercial books on reading lists, supporting a move to OEP.

REFLECTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Our reflections are from both a library and academic viewpoint. The eBureau is a collaboration that crosses library and academic boundaries, and, likewise, the following reflections are part of a writing collaboration that brings together the perspectives of library staff (Salisbury; Chang) and eBureau authors (Julien; Lexis).

Reflections of eBureau authors

La Trobe has a long-standing commitment to social justice and widening participation in higher education, and, as eBureau authors, we feel pride and satisfaction from writing high-quality books that are available to our students free of charge. Publishing an open textbook with the eBureau provides authors with a significant support structure that allows them to focus on writing while other aspects of publication are managed by experts, including editors, designers, and copyright officers. The result is a product that meets professional standards in terms of content, aesthetics, and ease of use (e.g., navigation, search). The quality of the eBureau open textbooks provides credibility to the textbook. The high level of support somewhat makes up for the challenges authors face to find time to write a manuscript; this generally is not covered in academic workload allocations. Because the books are designed to support La Trobe students, some of the work is covered by teaching preparation time, but writing a comprehensive and coherent book is a big undertaking. Writing a manuscript takes time, but this is balanced by the opportunity to collaborate with the eBureau and produce a high-quality, freely available book that will result in exposure, collaborations, and impact, which can be leveraged when applying for promotion, teaching awards, and jobs.

An important metric for successful academic promotions is impact. A publication with the eBureau provides authors with the opportunity to demonstrate impact through uptake of resources by colleagues teaching within La Trobe, nationally and internationally. In addition to widespread impact on student experience, uptake of resources by colleagues builds the authors' national and international profile and can lead to opportunities for cross-institutional collaborations, which may result in further publications (books, journal articles) or research projects.

The link between research and eBureau publications is less straightforward than with teaching, especially for research-informed textbooks. An ongoing challenge is receiving recognition of eBureau publications for Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) ratings where the books include significant research components. This is important for legitimizing the works through metrics used by universities to assess quality and impact, as was the case for *Democracy in Difference* (D'Cruz, 2020) when it successfully met eligibility criteria for ERA in 2021.

Through publication with the eBureau, the implications of different Creative Commons licenses for adoption and adaptation of work while still retaining "ownership" of the work have become clearer. Applying a more open license increases opportunities to promote books on OER platforms; opportunities to collaborate with academics at other institutions are among the rewards of taking a holistic and long-term view of the benefits of publishing with the eBureau.

Reflections of library staff

As library staff involved in the strategic and operational aspects of the eBureau, we have been on a steep learning curve since 2016. Our reflections about this journey are grouped in this section according to key themes and include our ideas for future improvement and what we might do differently if we were setting out anew.

Building critical mass. For library staff, the biggest challenge has been sustaining the content pipeline needed to scale up our publishing operation enough to ensure open textbooks are a viable alternative to traditional publishing. It requires consistent effort and deliberate attention to changing practice and ways of working to maintain a content pipeline that will achieve the change that we aspired to at the outset of our eBureau journey. Although the published eBureau titles have had an impact, it has been harder to reach a critical mass that makes open textbook creation part of sustained OEP at La Trobe. It takes a whole institution to transform OEP practice, and we need to continue to work across the institution and the academic library sector to achieve that change.

Accessibility. Open textbooks have limited accessibility when they are published only in PDF format, as has been the norm with eBureau publications. To expand the reach of the eBureau

and achieve its mission of increased access to free high-quality resources, it will be important to choose a production platform for the future that will create books that comply with international accessibility standards such as Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. Format options such as HTML and ePub can vastly improve accessibility, particularly for students who use screen readers. The lesson here is clear: accessibility must be planned from the start.

Targeted marketing. To establish the eBureau, we focused on the publication workflow of textbooks for a specific subject or course, but we have learned that the post-publication phase is equally important. We have found that documented communication plans are an effective way to link identification of stakeholders with a targeted series of promotional activities via the library socials, web page, and other channels used by library outreach staff. Academics also play a role in promoting their publications in the media and via academic profiles as part of their usual routines. For example, Katherine Seaton's promotion of her textbook *Don't cheat yourself: scenarios to clarify collusion confusion* (Seaton, 2018) led to an invitation to write a journal article (Seaton, 2020). Promotion and marketing of open textbook titles has required development of new skills within the library to identify engagement opportunities, plan book launches, design promotional material, create promotional videos (e.g., La Trobe University Library, 2021a), and collaborate with institutional marketing departments. For most open textbooks, the key audiences are teaching staff (local adoption), other universities (international/national adoption), and students. A targeted approach is important because it highlights the fact that take-up beyond the course a textbook is designed for is not an automatic or guaranteed outcome. It requires effective planning, communication, and adopting a marketing mindset.

Reading list integration. While we continue to partner with academics to sustain a content pipeline to increase the number of eBureau publications, our parallel strategy to reduce the cost of resources for students involves working toward making all reading lists at La Trobe digital and free for students. This requires librarians to partner with traditional publishers and academics to build reading lists that include a mix of eBureau publications (adapted or created open textbooks), adopted open textbooks, other OER, and unlimited access to commercial digital textbooks. In 2019, only 25% of subjects at La Trobe had a digital and free reading list. In 2020, this was increased to 60%, and in 2021 it was increased again to 80%. It is testament to library staff from all library teams and their relationship with academics and publishers that this level of transformation has been achieved and is ongoing. The challenge going forward is to find the right balance of commercial digital publications, OER, and eBureau publications in our reading lists. The eBureau is an important part of the Library's drive to create digital and free reading lists in order to improve student access, affordability, experience, and success.

Assessing impact and value. Evaluating the impact and value of an open textbook is challenging. eBureau download statistics measure access but not the difference that open

textbooks make as a pedagogical strategy or dollars saved for students. Unlike traditional research outputs, open textbooks rarely receive scholarly citations that can be easily tracked through bibliographic tools. Furthermore, there is no system of alerts notifying when a text has been newly adopted (note that Google Alerts can help in a limited fashion). Calculating the true student cost savings is difficult because one can only make educated guesses about what the cost to students might have been if all students purchased a commercial textbook.

Academics create open resources for a wide variety of reasons, and it is important to go beyond the lens of cost savings and assess other outcomes through which open textbooks improve teaching and learning. As previously discussed, in measuring the impact and value of the eBureau we have tried to use multiple qualitative and quantitative methods. This includes direct personal contact with those who are identified as adopters of the textbook, resulting in testimonials, interviews, and narrative insights into how textbook creation has changed learning and teaching practices and experience.

Academic motivations for authoring open textbooks. A key insight we have gained from working with our academic partners is the strikingly diverse range of drivers that motivate authors to invest their time into writing an open textbook. The most common motivations that we have observed include writing open textbooks to do the following:

- Fill a gap identified in the commercial textbook market for a given discipline
- Improve the currency of resources to replace outdated content and reflect contemporary debates and changes
- Align the textbook with structure of the subject
- Achieve autonomy to control the breadth, depth, and scope of content
- Reduce costs for students
- Publish exceptional student work
- Tackle a specific and persistent pedagogical challenge through a focused resource

This diversity of motivations demonstrates that academics engage in open textbook projects for a wide range of reasons related to pedagogy, content, and practical challenges faced in day-to-day learning and teaching. Whereas motivation will depend on institutional context, understanding local motivations informs our outreach efforts.

Managing expectations. Developing an open textbook is a complex endeavor that often involves two or more partners coming from different perspectives, performing different roles, and possessing different communication styles. It is crucial to have tools that support a shared

understanding and outline clear eligibility criteria, expectations, responsibilities, and likely outcomes from the beginning. Tools that can assist with this include author proposal forms, memorandums of understanding (outlining guiding principles and role expectations), and shared project management frameworks (La Trobe University Library, 2021b).

The digital divide. The eBureau produces open textbooks in digital formats to save students buying print or digital resources, but we are also aware that our authors are involved in teaching and research in areas with limited Internet access. This challenge has come to the fore in a new eBureau book project, *Gender-Based Violence and Healthcare in Timor-Leste* (see https://library.latrobe.edu.au/ebureau/ebook.html#genderbased). Because of the location of the author's research and teaching activity, in addition to the digital format that will be used by La Trobe students, post-publication plans will include the distribution of print copies in Timor to health care workers, allied health students, hospitals, and universities who lack the level of Internet access needed to easily access the digital version. This scenario has prompted interesting questions about what "open" means in a digitally divided world. In addition to the financial and logistical aspects of print-on-demand arrangements, the design of this resource must be carefully optimized for both print and digital. For example, black and white contrast ratios must be accessible for affordable printing, even though it is primarily a digital textbook.

Over the last 6 years, becoming a library publisher has taught us that open textbook publishing requires a strong partnership between the library and academic authors to sustain a steady content pipeline. Publishing open textbooks is library collaboration and sharing in action, and, when embarking on this endeavor, it is important to ask at the outset the following:

- Does the university/library mission align with open textbook publishing?
- Who are the university/library sponsors and advocates?
- What is the scope of content that will be published?
- Who are the internal and external partners?
- What are the publishing service priorities, service model, and workflows?
- What infrastructure is needed and is it scalable?
- What existing or new library roles are involved, and where does responsibility best sit?
- How will the service be sustained financially?
- What are the opportunities to provide academics with grants to support workload and engagement?

- How will the content pipeline be sustained?
- How will the service be evaluated?
- How will an open textbook publishing service fit with library collection practices particularly related to reading lists services?
- What are the opportunities to partner and collaborate with other libraries and institutions in the higher education sector?

NEXT STEPS

Our immediate operational priority is to continue leveraging the affordances of open textbooks to maximize accessibility and engagement for students. Testing new platforms (e.g., PressBooks) is aimed toward our desire for improvements to meet accessibility standards, to incorporate more interactive content (e.g., HTML5 Package elements) for enhanced active learning, to normalize formats compatible with screen readers (e.g., HTML and ePub), and to enable easier use of social annotation for shared reading experiences. We are also taking steps to intentionally address multiple dimensions of social justice. The eBureau focus has been on the redistributive dimension (inclusivity through reducing costs to access), but, as Lambert (2018) outlines, recognitive and representational forms of justice are just as pivotal to realizing social justice. Deepening the eBureau's commitment to diverse principles of social justice may include systematic "sensitivity screening" and "sensitivity reads" of open textbook manuscripts to support cultural safety. As aforementioned, this approach is being piloted for the development of a culturally sensitive second edition of *Research and Evidence in Practice*, particularly in relation to indigenous Australian communities. Libraries' core values around freely connecting knowledge and communities make arguments for libraries to embrace open textbook creation enticing, if not compelling. And, like other libraries, we have taken up the open textbook publishing challenge because, as Kleymeer (2010) argued, there is no "better place from which to launch such an ambitious [OER] program than the library, the heart of the university" (Kleymeer et al., 2010, p. 248).

In establishing the eBureau, our aim was to become one of Australia's leading open textbook publishers, and we have successfully established systems and structures to support this ambition. Our eBureau titles are making a difference for authors and students. However, in the international pool of open textbooks available to discover, adopt, and adapt, the sum of our creation is small. Similarly, many other library publishers of open textbooks are producing tens rather than hundreds of titles. However, collectively, the number of open textbooks in international directories is in the tens of thousands. Open textbook publishing may start with individual library staff working with academics at their institution, but the potential of open textbooks is found in collaboration across the higher education community. Over the past

6 years, we have learned that the eBureau cannot exist in isolation; it needs to be part of an open textbook ecology.

Collaboration and partnership between library staff, academics, professional staff, and external stakeholders has made the eBureau work at La Trobe, and, equally, it is collaboration that will build a critical mass of open textbooks in the higher education sector. More strategically, the next step for us in building on the success of the eBureau is to become part of a wider community of knowledge creators and to contribute a third wave of open textbook publishing in Australia; in 2022, the Council of Australian University Librarians OER Collective project (Council of Australian University Librarians, 2021) will give us that opportunity. Being part of this project will allow us to continue to build on the eBureau's strengths and participate in collectively building a critical mass of open textbooks across institutions. Like other library OA publishing activity, the eBureau needs to be part of an open textbook ecology: a network that extends across the higher education sector in order to resolve the universal issues associated with open textbook publishing and cultivate and nurture future OEP.

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