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CIRT NEWS

CENTER FOR INSTRUCTION AND RESEARCH TECHNOLOGY

MARCH 2019

CIRT News is published four times a year by the Center for Instruction and Research Technology at the University of North Florida.

To view past newsletters, current events, and more, visit www.unf.edu/cirt.

Visit CIRT online at:

- Faculty Spotlight: Adopting High-Quality, Peer-Reviewed, and Openly Licensed Textbooks
- Digital Learning and Innovation: UNF Online
- Upcoming Events
- CIRT Open House
- Digital Thinking: Live Streaming
- Best Practices Online: Tips for Implementing Open Educational Resources
- Canvas News
- New in CIRT

Faculty Spotlight: Adopting High-Quality, Peer-Reviewed, and Openly Licensed Textbooks

Featured Faculty Member: Dr. Jack Hewitt, Physics Department

► Listen

While redesigning AST2002: Basic Astronomy, Dr. Jack Hewitt, Assistant Professor of Physics, joined the UNF OER Initiative because he wanted to incorporate open educational resources (OERs) to decrease costs to students while improving and updating the pedagogical approach in the course. The OER Initiative at UNF is a joint project led by the Center for Instruction and Research Technology (CIRT) and the Thomas G. Carpenter Library that seeks to lower college costs for UNF students by encouraging UNF faculty to adopt quality OERs in their courses and by providing faculty with extensive support in locating and implementing OER materials. Faculty are paired with an instructional designer and the online learning librarian to assist in finding and implementing academically equivalent OER content to replace conventional textbooks and other costly materials.

For his revised course, Hewitt utilized the OpenStax Astronomy textbook, which is freely available to be shared and adapted under a creative commons license (CC BY 4.0) at zero cost to students. OpenStax is a nonprofit educational initiative based at Rice University which publishes high-quality, peer-reviewed, openly licensed college textbooks that are absolutely free online and low cost in print. They also develop low-cost, research-based courseware, OpenStax Tutor Beta, that gives students spaced practice and personalized questions to support learning success.
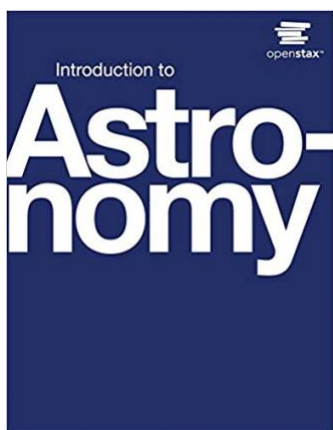
The OpenStax text that Hewitt adopted includes free resources available to verified instructors, including PowerPoint slides, answer guides for end-of-chapter questions, quiz banks, and a course cartridge that integrates the e-book and other resources into the Canvas learning management system.

Hewitt found this to be a good introductory textbook for a full-term course, but it did not offer the Tutor Beta option, and in comparison to the publisher textbook students had previously used, it lacked interactive tutorials and simulations. To overcome this challenge, he once again sought out OERs and adopted The Nebraska Astronomy Applet Project. This online resource includes interactive, simulator-based laboratories for introductory astronomy that Hewitt uses to supplement the textbook. These simulations can be linked to or embedded within the course pages of Canvas for convenient student access.

Hewitt's second goal for incorporating OERs was to improve and update the pedagogical approach used in the course. In selecting an OpenStax textbook, Hewitt also integrated a social text-annotation tool called Perusall. Perusall engages students by creating an online environment where students annotate readings and asynchronously respond to one another's comments and questions. Hewitt describes it as, "a discussion board built into the textbook, that is automatically graded and summarized for instructors." Since discovering Perusall, Hewitt has used it in his astronomy lecture courses, astronomy labs, and upper-level astrophysics courses. He finds being able to read student annotations to the text, including asking questions and answering the questions of other students, is exceptionally valuable to help focus class time on the topics of

greatest difficulty. Similar to OpenStax, Perusall is free for use with OERs and can be integrated into Canvas.

For more information about using, finding, or incorporating OpenStax resources and other OERs in your courses, visit the OER Initiative page or contact CIRT at cirtlab@unf.edu.

Digital Learning and Innovation: UNF Online
Deb Miller, Assistant Vice-President for Digital Learning and Innovation
► Listen

As announced in February, a new unit has been established at the University to provide leadership for the development and delivery of high-quality online learning experiences. UNF Online will focus on online student success, program development, compliance, policy development, and fiscal management.

Online delivery of instruction is an important tool at UNF. It allows us to provide flexibility to students in completing their degrees in a timely manner and provides access to fully online degree programs in areas of high need or where UNF can provide unique offerings. Growth in distance learning and a continued emphasis from the Board of Governors in online learning necessitates the establishment of an independent unit dedicated to the support and strategic management of distance learning.

UNF Online is currently developing plans to market fully online programs and to provide admission support and success coaching for students in those programs. The unit will coordinate other support services for fully online students, and develop and disseminate distance learning related policies and procedures. Additionally, this unit will be responsible for a number of reporting and compliance-related functions.

I am excited about the opportunities UNF Online will bring to partner with colleges to develop new online degree offerings that serve students in our region and beyond, and I look forward to working with the Distance Learning Committee to identify new strategic goals for distance learning at UNF.

CIRT will continue its mission of faculty support and development, including faculty use of Canvas and the development of courses in all learning modalities.

If you have any questions or ideas, don't hesitate to reach out.

Upcoming Events
Registration is required for these events.

[CANVAS ADVANCED](#)
1:00pm - 2:30pm Thursday, March 7, 2019

[OER OFFICE HOURS](#)
2:00pm - 4:00pm Thursday, March 7, 2019

[BLUEJEANS](#)
10:00am - 11:00am Friday, March 8, 2019

For more events please visit the [CIRT Events page](#)

CIRT Open House

Date: April 3, 2019
Time: 10 AM - 2 PM
Location: Center for Instruction and Research Technology (CIRT), Building 1/1801 & Building 10/1200

Join us on Wednesday, April 3, 2019 for an open house and walking tour of CIRT's facilities, including the Online Learning Lab, Instructional Design and Online Learning Support suites, and the Video Studio. You will have the opportunity to meet with staff, explore available services and support options, see tool demonstrations, and acquire useful resources. During lunch, two faculty guest speakers will discuss how they have partnered with CIRT on various projects and initiatives.

You have the option to attend the morning, lunch, and afternoon sessions, or all three. Food and refreshments will be provided. To get an accurate count for planning, [registration is appreciated](#).

Digital Thinking: Live Streaming
Jessica Harden, Educational Media Coordinator
► Listen

Synchronous video communication is a growing technological trend. Many instructors are familiar with web conferencing platforms like Skype and Bluejeans, but you may not be familiar with another type of synchronous video delivery, Open Broadcasting, which allows users to mix multiple inputs and live stream everything from office hours to live concerts. While video conferencing is usually used for smaller audiences where the intent is two way communication, live streaming allows you to broadcast many types of content to a much larger, often public audience. In higher education live streaming communication can be an excellent tool when a face-to-face meeting is difficult. Many faculty use video conferencing tools in and out of Canvas to communicate with students, one

professor has a unique solution that was featured in the last edition of CIRT News – live streaming office hours using Twitch. Below is a list of tools that can be used for live streaming.

Open Broadcast Software allows users to take inputs (such as webcams and microphones) and arrange them for output to popular live streaming platforms like YouTube and Twitch. You can create a layout of video, graphics, or other media and OBS will send the live layout to the platform of your choice. This is useful if you want to include more in you video communication such as a logo, a second video source, or even a chat window where users can interact with you on screen. OBS if free and available for Windows, Mac, and Linux.

YouTube is a video hosting platform that is well known as a resource for finding videos on any number of topics. YouTube also offers the ability to live stream. This means that anyone with a link to your YouTube channel would be able to view your synchronous video communication. YouTube can be used with programs like OBS to give you a custom layout or even handle multiple video inputs.

Twitch became a popular synchronous video communication platform among gamers who would live stream their experiences playing through video games. Now Twitch is used to broadcast everything from eSports to cooking lessons. This is also compatible with OBS and can be highly customized. Users create their own channel and share that link with their audience.

Webcams can be useful tools for synchronous video communication. They are easy to setup, typically plugging in to the USB port of a computer. They can be used as the video input for programs like OBS.

Zoom cameras are handheld camcorders that can be used as webcams. They require drivers to be installed on the computer but are a good choice because they can be more flexible than webcams. They can be set up on a tripod to film in larger settings.

One of the most important aspects of good synchronous video communication is good audio. In many cases the microphone built into the computer being used to stream is enough, however sometimes an external microphone can be needed. The Snowball microphone is perfect for individual or some group audio. It is easy to use because it plugs into the USB port of the computer. It can also be used as the audio input on OBS.

CIRT has webcams, zoom cameras, and Snowball microphones available for checkout.

For more information about live streaming please contact Jessica Harden at Jessica.harden@unf.edu.

Best Practices Online: Tips for Implementing Open Educational Resources

Jamie Chaires, Instructional Designer

► Listen

Overview

The high financial burden of traditional college textbooks and its impact on accessibility and student success has brought national and global attention to textbook affordability issues. Although a 2018 National Higher Education Report shows steady growth in awareness of open educational resources (OER), the survey of over 4,000 faculty and department chairpersons indicated only 46% had any level of awareness of OER alternatives.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation provides the following definition of OER:

Open Educational Resources are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.

With the steady growth of OER awareness at institutions of higher education and associated increase in demand from instructors and students, more instructional materials of high-quality are being created and made available for use across a wide array of disciplines.

In Practice

Regardless of what level of implementation you are in currently - from supplementing a textbook with OERs to teaching an entire course with only OERs – the following tips are best practices for finding and sharing online resources.

- **When linking to resources from the Canvas LMS, use descriptive titles for links instead of pasting the full URL.** Although it may be tempting to copy and paste the full URL for a website or digital resource into Canvas for students to access, this creates an accessibility issue for students who may be using screen readers. Instead, use a title that describes the resource and insert a hyperlink.

- **Provide structure and organize content for easy access.** You can use your Canvas course to share and direct students to instructional materials. Articulate to students how the content or resource should be used. CIRT's course template D is designed for web-enhanced face-to-face courses.

- **Provide ways for students to interact with the content and consider multiple means of representation**. There are many instructional strategies and educational media tools for engaging students with content. Talk to an instructional designer in CIRT to learn more and

discuss your course objectives.

- **Begin your search for course content using some of the larger, established OER databases.** Many of these repositories will offer full courses or full textbooks with supporting instructional materials. Try searching the [Open Textbook Library](#) for textbooks that are affiliated with higher education institutions or professional organizations. See more databases in the additional resources section below.

- **Consider using articles and eBook chapters instead of textbooks for targeted course readings.** Sometimes an entire textbook isn't necessary or students could gain more from current, up-to-date resources in their field of study. If appropriate for your course, give the responsibility to students to research and share resources with the class.

- **Use the Advanced Search field in Google.** You can narrow your search results by usage rights and select "free to use, share, or modify".

- **Trust your gut, and your training.** If the content doesn't appear accurate, ask a librarian to fact check it or don't use it.

- **Identify tools to support student success in your course and consider low-cost options for interactive courseware.** [OpenNow](#) from Cengage as well as [Lumen Learning](#) offer many common course titles that include OER content, plus videos and assignments. [Alta by Knewton](#) boasts an adaptive learning courseware platform. Also, some departments or programs may be able to adopt textbooks from the same publisher that offers low-cost options such as [Cengage Unlimited.](#)

If you are interested in learning more about using OERs or low-cost options for instructional materials, please set up a consultation with an [instructional designer](#) at CIRT or email [cirtlab@unf.edu](#).

Additional Resources
Learn about the [UNF OER Initiative](#).

[OER Commons](#) is a public digital library of open educational resources. Explore, create, and collaborate with educators around the world to improve curriculum.

[OpenStax Partners](#) create optional low-cost technology products that are integrated with [OpenStax](#) books to make adopting OERs easier or more effective.

Read the November 2018 CIRT News: Director's Message: [Textbook Affordability Initiatives at UNF](#) by Dr. Deb Miller

Contact the UNF bookstore about creating low-cost [course packs](#) with a combination of publisher materials and open education resources.

[The Hewlett Foundation](#) offers grants for the development of OERs.

References
Open Educational Resources. (2019). *Hewlett Foundation.* Retrieved 25 February 2019, from https://hewlett.org/strategy/open-educational-resources/

Seaman, J.E., & Seaman, J. (2018). Freeing the textbook: Open education resources in U.S. higher education.

▲[Return to top](#)

Canvas News: Focus on Accessibility
Daniel Mainwaring, Assistant Director of Online Learning Support
Iris Schwimmer, Coordinator of Accessibility Training

Accessibility is not something to think of in terms of absolutes; it exists on a spectrum and can be continuously improved. To make course content accessible in Canvas, instructors have multiple tools and resources at their disposal. Instructors have the option of requesting an Accessibility Review of their courses through CIRT to help guide them in this process. There is also an accessibility tool built into the LMS. The "Check Accessibility" button at the end of the second row of the toolbar in the Rich Content Editor (RCE), circled in the screenshot below, will assess any content created in the RCE for the 11 most common accessibility barriers and provide the user with a list of identified issues. Once activated a description of the problem, along with an option to correct it, will be presented to maximize usability.
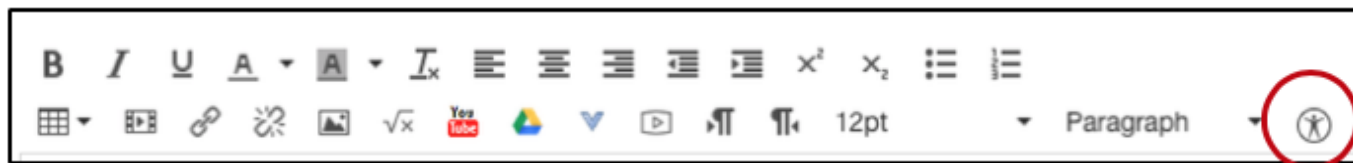
Creating Accessible Course Content
Creating accessible course content in the RCE can seem like a daunting task. However, there are simple principles and guidelines to follow that will increase the accessibility of course materials. The default font and colors are already accessible. If you decide to try something else, it is highly recommended to select a text font, size, and color that is legible to ensure readability. Font size should be at least 12 points or above, and black text on a white background has the highest contrast. You can also assure that the chosen font size and color are accessible by using [WebAIM's Color Contrast Checker](#).

Below is a list of things to avoid and how to fix them:
- Underlined text for emphasis. Underlined text should be strictly used for hyperlinks.
  Try not to copy and paste the URL into the text - screen readers don't like it; instead, use the hyperlink tool in the Rich Content Editor.

- Color reliance (using hue, shade, tint or tone as the only means of conveying information).
  Instead, separate the content, provide text labels, or use icons.
- Pseudo-lists created using dashes.
  Instead, style appropriately using bullet points or numbers.
- Using tables to organize content.
  Instead, only use tables to present data and use the appropriate headers.

The Canvas RCE allows for the organization of content through headings. The title of the page will automatically be formatted while the writing in the text box will have to be formatted manually. Relying on bold, italics, color, and increased font size alone is not sufficient for users that depend on screen readers. Sighted users will be able to skim through content with pseudo-headings for comprehension and to save time, but screen reader users will not have the same benefit. To bypass this inequity, it is best practice to apply synchronous headings.

Accessible Media

Images without sufficient alt text are inaccessible for individuals with visual impairments. Making them accessible can be done quickly. When inserting an image into the Rich Content Editor be sure to include sufficient alternative text to improve accessibility. This alt text is read by the screen reader to help convey significance. Alt text should be less than 120 characters and does not need to include "Image of" or "Graphic of" as the screen reader will present the picture appropriately. If the image is just for decorative purposes, check the box next to "Decorative Image." Alt text is usually enough, but if the image is complex, consider including a caption for more detail.

Videos in course content can be made accessible through captions and transcriptions. Upload a video into Arc on Canvas and select the captions tab. To automatically generate captions for your media, choose the spoken language and click the request button. You will be able to review captions for any errors before publishing. When designing a video, it is ideal to boost longevity by not being overly specific. Avoid stating semesters, years, or section names so that your recorded content can be used for years to come. If the auto generated captions are not accurate, contact CIRT and we can provide captions and transcripts through our 3Play service.

CIRT Support and Resources

While you can do many things on your own to improve the accessibility of course materials in the LMS, CIRT resources are also available to assist you . Instructors can schedule a meeting with our Coordinator of Accessibility Training, Iris Schwimmer, through Libcal or just drop on by. We also have software and solutions to assist with captioning audio and video content, and are happy to discuss questions you have about making any media, files, or course content accessible.

Helpful Pages:
CIRT Accessibility & UDL
DRC Learning Modules

Canvas Resources:
How do I use the Accessibility Checker in the Rich Content Editor as an Instructor?
General Accessibility Design Guidelines
Creating Accessible Tables in the Rich Content Editor
Making Lists Accessible in Canvas
Canvas: Embed images from the web and provide alternative text
How do I add captions to Arc media in Canvas?

New in CIRT

Iris Schwimmer is a graduate of the University of Florida with a B.S. in Health Education and is currently pursuing her master's at UNF. She joined the CIRT team after working for the public school system, the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind, and the Department of Education, Division of Blind Services. Advocating for instructional equality has remained a constant throughout her career and she plans to continue promoting access in her role as the Training Coordinator for Accessibility. In her free time, Iris enjoys playing piano, cooking, and spending time outdoors with her dogs (who are both rescues named Max) and cat.

▲Return to top