

Finding and Evaluating AOER: Identifying Sources of and Support for AOER

Slide One (1)

Greetings! Welcome to Finding and Evaluating AOER: Identifying Sources of and Support for AOER. My name is Dr. Megan Lowe. I am the Director of University Libraries at Northwestern State University of Louisiana. I am located at the main campus of Northwestern, which is located in Natchitoches. My 'home' library is Watson Memorial Library. I am also the OER Content Expert for the UL System! I have been involved in the open access movement for many years, which led me into open education resources (OER) about a decade ago. Since then, I've been involved with OER at the institutional and state levels. I obtained my doctorate in 2022, and I did my dissertation on faculty perceptions of AOER.

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Slide Two (2)

Abbey Elder based her presentation on a collection of other resources, which are included here. This presentation is actually an excellent example of an open education resource – there's no need to reinvent the wheel, when you can stand on the shoulders of giants!

Slide Three (3)

One of the biggest complaints at the outset of the OER movement was the inability to find OER. Now, it's phrased a bit different – there's so much, how do you go about finding the right resource for your needs?

Slide Four (4)

- One of the earliest complaints about OER was that there simply weren't that many available.
- While that complaint still holds water in some corners – certain disciplines, certain education levels – in other corners, that is most certainly no longer the case.

- Our old friend Google is good at many things, but it's not always great at helping discover OER.
- Between all of these points, discovering OER can be difficult and overwhelming. There's so much out there that it can be hard to know where to start!
- Additionally, regarding AER, since those are often located in databases or online catalogs, they are not freely available on the web.

Slide Five (5)

The key here is the key to any good search when attempting to find resources: optimizing the searching process.

1. Identify keywords (e.g., discipline, level, type of resource wanted/needed).
2. Search broadly ([Affordable Learning LOUIS](#), [OASIS](#), [Open Textbook Library](#), [OpenStax](#), even Google/Google Scholar).
3. Start general and then get specific – filter results using different parameters.
4. Take advantage of curated lists (working smarter not harder).
5. Curate content (evaluate: relevancy, accuracy, quality, accessibility, licensing).
6. Reflect and repeat (did you find materials that fit your needs?).

Additional OER repositories and databases can be found at <https://instr.iastate.libguides.com/oer>

Slide Six (6)

One tool that can help you in the process is the OER Treasure Hunt Worksheet. Much in the same way we have students evaluate resources for their research papers, this worksheet can help you in the process of identifying possible OER (and even AER!) for your courses. Abbey Elder adapted this from SPARC, and it can be adapted and modified for your needs. It could even be used as an assignment with your students. A link to the Google Doc is included in the resources of this slide deck.

Slide Seven (7)

- Searching an OER repository can result in a faster and more productive search. (*Narrows the field considerably versus Google!*)
- Resources have been curated and organized into various categories including discipline, format, and open license.
- Many repositories have either peer reviews or a rating scale where users have shared their perception or experience with the resource.
- As always: there's no need to reinvent the wheel.

Slide Eight (8)

These are some good search tips generally speaking for finding AOER.

- Access different repositories and continue checking because they are always growing and being updated. Be sure to use their filters to refine (e.g., date, material type, etc.).
- Switch up your search terms (use synonyms and broader, or narrow terms).
- Use Boolean Operators (AND, OR, NOT) to boost the power of your search.
- Look for smaller pieces of content or weekly topics (chapters, ancillary materials, etc.).
- Keep a record of your results.
- Know when to stop searching.

Sometimes the perfect OER just doesn't exist. You may need to think about adapting/creating an OER, selecting an Affordable Educational Resource, or using a library resource.

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You may find a lot...look at all these titles on pre-calculus, and this is just a sampling – there are many more out there!

Slide Ten (10)

Or not so much. I conducted this search on *pharmacokinetics* in the OASIS ebook repository. The oldest title on this list is from 2012. The newest title is from 2019. In some disciplines, currency may not matter. In others, it most certainly will.

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In some cases, you may find next to nothing. This is about the only sight-singing title one may find in terms of OER (currently).

Slide Twelve (12)

I'll talk more about LOUIS and Affordable Learning Louisiana (or ALL) later in this presentation, but I wanted to highlight that LOUIS/ALL does have an OER Commons repository. The great thing about their OER Commons is that the resources align with the Louisiana Statewide common course catalog. It also facilitates the creation of OER by Louisiana educators. Many of the resources produced thanks to the grants LOUIS has won for OER have been placed in the OER Commons!

Slide Thirteen (13)

So, once you find OER, how do you evaluate them? It's important to evaluate them, as quality can still sometimes be an issue, and one does wish to ensure that one is selecting the right source for your needs.

Slide Fourteen (14)

Well, evaluation can be based on rubrics (of course); review processes (aka peer review); and your individual needs. In fact, it couldn't hurt to consider a combo or all three of these domains when evaluating a potential OER "in the wild" (that is, not necessarily in a vetted OER repository).

Slide Fifteen (15)

There are several pre-existing rubrics available. The one on the slide is from the Open Textbook Library, but the others are just as useful.

Slide Sixteen (16)

The basic elements to consider – though this is by no means an exhaustive list – include: content coverage; alignment with your course; accessibility; inclusivity; and formats available. You might also consider currency, accuracy, adaptability, and clarity/comprehensibility.

Slide Seventeen (17)

Unlike commercial textbooks, many open textbooks undergo **peer review** by subject matter experts.

Other reviews may include:

- User reviews posted in repositories like the [Open Textbook Library](#)
- Reviews by organizations (e.g., [American Institute of Mathematics](#))

Slide Eighteen (18)

Going back to Affordable Learning LOUISiana and LOUIS...

Slide Nineteen (19)

If you aren't familiar with LOUIS...

- It is the statewide academic library consortium, featuring 48 member institutions/libraries representing 2-year and 4-year, public and private, and special institutions.
- Begun in the late 1990s at LSU, LOUIS is now under the auspices of the Board of Regents.
- All institutions within the UL System are members of LOUIS.
- Through LOUIS, libraries acquire resources in more cost-effective ways through cooperative procurement. It also supports professionals working in libraries throughout the state through professional development.
- LOUIS also coordinates many affordable learning programs in the state through Affordable Learning LOUISiana.

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Most of the electronic databases and resources accessible through your libraries are acquired through LOUIS. These resources include a variety of periodicals/journals, ebooks, and other resources.

Consequently, you have access to all kinds of Affordable Education Resources (AER) **through LOUIS**.

Slide Twenty-One (21)

This list of resources is for Northwestern, but it's representative of what all LOUIS libraries have access to. All of these resources represent potential AER.

Slide Twenty-Two (22)

This is a screengrab from the LOUIS ALL website that provides an overview of what LOUIS is currently engaged with in terms of AOER. LOUIS coordinates a lot of AOER efforts in the state!

Slide Twenty-Three (23)

Two more tools you can use (thanks to LOUIS) – CloudSource OA and BLUEcloud Course Lists.

Slide Twenty-Four (24)

You don't have to do anything to take advantage of CloudSource OA. It's already integrated into your libraries' systems. This is what it looks like for University Libraries at Northwestern State University.

Slide Twenty-Five (25)

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Slide Twenty-Six (26)

Course Lists takes more effort. It's a plugin that works with most learning management systems (including Moodle and Canvas). You already have access to this resource – just takes making sure the plugin is enabled on the back end.

Slide Twenty-Seven (27)

Course Lists hasn't been fully integrated into Canvas yet, but we wanted to make y'all aware that it will be coming soon! Look out for programming later in the year!

Slide Twenty-Eight (28)

Here are some of the resources referred to in the presentation!

Slide Twenty-Nine (29)

Here are some more!

Slide Thirty (30)

Like I said before: you have me! If you have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. The best way to reach me is through email. My email is loweme@nsula.edu. Thanks for your attention today!