



# OPEN TEXTBOOKS

## Arguments For and Against Open Textbooks

### Open Textbook Advocates Argue:<sup>1</sup>

- Digital delivery of materials costs less for students
- Open Textbooks are more affordable and easily accessible
- Open textbooks are available in printable formats (pdf & print on demand)
- Open textbooks can be accessed online or downloaded to access offline
- Unlike many e-books open textbooks are not limited to a finite number of simultaneous users
- Unlike many e-books open textbooks have supplemental materials that are available without individual licenses

### Open Textbook Opponents Argue:<sup>2</sup>

- There is a high cost to provide high quality Textbooks
- There is a high cost to provide meaningful supplementary materials
- The demand for textbooks is high and justifies charging a high cost
- Tuition inflation has risen at a higher rate than textbook inflation – high textbook costs are just part of the price of education
- 75%-90% of students prefer printed textbooks to e-textbooks (depending on the study)
- Printed textbooks allow publishers to offer a variety of methods and formats. This includes blending text with e-supplements.

The Pros and cons discussed above were taken from the following two articles:

1. Allen, N. (2009) Course Correction: Executive Summary. *Educause Review*. 44 (1): 19-20
2. Oda, S & Sanislo, G(2009) Book Industry Trends:College. *Educause Review*. 44 (1): 14-16

## Case Study: An Open Textbook in Mathematics

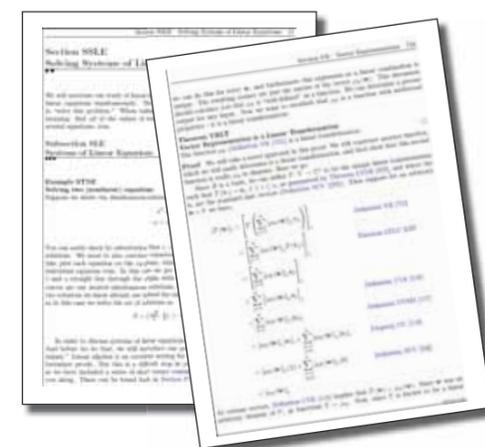
Frustrated with new editions that only had minor changes and rising textbook costs, Dr. Rob Beezer decided to write his own textbook for students in his sophomore Linear Algebra classes at the University of Puget Sound. He decided to make his textbook, A First Course in Linear Algebra, free not only to his students, but to students everywhere by using a GNU Free Documentation License. “A wide range of institutions including community colleges (Miramar), Liberal Arts Schools (Smith), and state universities (Colorado State) – have started using the textbook in courses.”<sup>1</sup>

Benefits to creating his textbook as an open textbook have included:

- The book is accessible online for free <http://linear.ups.edu>
- All 700 pages can be printed on demand for just \$29.70
- It is available in multiple formats including optimized formats for the Sony Reader and Amazon Kindle
- Proceeds from the print-on-demand and donations have generated financial returns equivalent to royalties
- Supplemental materials (like printable flashcards) are included and the text itself can hyperlink to additional sources to enhance student understanding of the material.

More information about Dr. Beezer’s decision to start an open textbook can be found at <http://linear.ups.edu> and in the following article:

1. Beezer, R. (2009) The Truly Free Textbook. *Educause Review*.44 (1): 23-24



## Open Textbooks in Florida

Orange Grove Texts Plus is partnering with the University Press of Florida to offer open textbooks. The goal of the project is to make “high-quality scholarship that is affordable, accessible, and adaptable to reader preferences.”\*

In September 2009, as part of a pilot project, 120 books were made freely available online. These books can be viewed online or downloaded for offline viewing. They can also be requested through on demand printing for 50% of the cost of traditional textbooks. “Orange Grove Texts Plus will eventually include a large selection of content from UPF’s backlist of more than 1600 titles.”\* In the future, professors may be able to develop open textbooks in a digital format for distribution through this imprint.

\*<http://www.upf.com/news/OrangeGrovePressRelease.pdf>

