

Creating Accessible OER:

What Makes Content
Accessible?



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UBC Point Grey Campus is on traditional, ancestral, unceded Musqueam Territory.

Photo: Musqueam Post, s̓ʔi:łqəy̓ qeqən (double-headed serpent post), on the UBCV Campus

Photo by UBC Brand and Marketing





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OE Week @ UBC

<https://bit.ly/3EYOHSU>



Wiki page for this session:

Info about the session, including links to resources and a copy of the slides, can be found on this UBC Wiki page:

https://wiki.ubc.ca/Sandbox:Accessible_OER_Workshop



Please note that this session is being recorded

We hope you will leave this session with:

- An introduction to why accessibility is important for learners and the OER community
- Considerations for designing accessible and open educational resources
- An understanding for where to find support and resources for creating accessibility open content.



Question:

What knowledge about “accessibility” do you bring with you, and what would you like to learn?

Open Educational Resources

Open Educational Resources (OER) are defined as “teaching, learning, and research resources that are **free of cost and access barriers**, and which also carry legal permission for open use..”

Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (n.d). *Open Education*. SPARC.
Retrieved from: <https://sparcopen.org/open-education/>



Affordability as a Barrier for Learning Materials

According to the 2022 AMS Academic Experience Survey:

- **\$1,253** is the average amount UBC undergraduates spend on textbooks and other course resources in the past year.
- **70%** of undergraduates in the last year reported going without textbooks or other course resources due to cost (30% reported doing so frequently or often)
- **19%** of all students reported having concerns about food insecurity (unsure of the ability to obtain food or feed oneself) on a monthly basis.

Why Is Accessibility Important for Open Resources?

- The promise of open education can trace its roots to the the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations 1948, which states “Everyone has a right to education.”
- The Open Education Movement “is built on the belief that everyone should have the freedom to use, customize, improve and redistribute educational resources without constraint” - The 2007 Cape Town Open Education Declaration
- There is more to “open” than just putting a resource online for free
- OER that is not accessible is not open for all learners

What Else Affects Accessibility?

- Day-to-day life
- Digital literacy
- Access to technology
- Structure of information
- Presentation of information



-adapted from Josie Gray (2019). [How to Create Inclusive and Accessible OER](#), BCcampus.ca

UBC Centre for Accessibility

- Serves registered UBC students with documented conditions
 - Students, instructors, advisors and staff work together
 - Accommodations are determined on an individual basis and can change
 - Accommodations are non-optional
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- Examples: extended time/private space for exams, note-taking assistance, alternate format materials, mobility training, captioning/ASL interpretation, reserved seating, adaptive furniture, accessible classroom assignments,

Accommodations and Accessibility

- Accommodations include accessibility concerns, but accommodations are student-specific, while accessibility is a broader design and conte

Why Accessible Design Is For Everyone

- Accommodates adaptive technologies (hardware, software, accessories)
- Accommodates as many learners as possible
- Accommodates those who don't necessarily identify as "disabled"
- Accommodates instructor revisions and changes!

Platforms and Accessibility

- How open is your platform? Do users need a log-in or VPN?
- Format choices: can users print, read offline, access via mobile?
- Media choices: incorporating video, audio, images, external links?
- Input choices: radio buttons, page navigation, embedded quizzes, collab...
- Layout choices: text boxes, notes, frames/embedded documents

Simplifying layout can improve user experiences, whether or not your users are relying on accessibility technologies: reduced cognitive burden, reduced technological friction, reduced frustration = better user experiences

Content Accessibility

Accessible content is great for your students, but it also makes your teaching life easier! Accessible content is durable, flexible, and functional.

Durable content: “future-proofed,” not tied to a specific platform or service

Flexible content: easy to update from term to term or as course requirements change; easy to modify, reorganize, edit, repurpose, and share.

Functional content: easy and pleasant for your students and TAs to use

Text-Based Content

- PDFs are technically “open” and technically “accessible,” but there are often better, easier, more pleasant options: PressBooks, Wiki, EPUB, HTML
- If it absolutely, positively has to be a PDF: make it accessible!
- Text should be adjustable: can users change font/size, change colour, print, zoom in, select?
- Limit use of text boxes and charts/tables where possible; simplified list formatting and bullet points can help
- Use headings and tags

Image-Based Content

- “Decorative” versus “Load-bearing” images
- If critical content/meaning is conveyed by an image, provide description
- “Alt-text” versus “Image description”
- Don’t rely on colour, size, or positionality to convey meaning
- Fun is important, but legibility is more important

Sometimes students need a little extra support for specific content types. CfA is here to support you and your student in those cases.

Upcoming workshops will focus on image description, accessible data visualization, and creating accessible visual content – join us!

Creating Accessible Images

It's tempting to use screenshots or PDF, but over time image quality can degrade, and your images might not be zoomable/printable, or even interpretable...

- Vector graphics are accessible and durable – can save you time and frustration
- UBC faculty do have access to Adobe Creative Cloud – but bear in mind that your TAs and students might not have access
- Free/open source options: GIMP, LibreOffice Draw, Vecteezy, Inkscape

Video and Audio Accessibility

- Captions are welcomed by many users. When possible, allow users to toggle on/off. AI-generated captions are great time-savers... but do proofread!
- Full video description is not always needed, but avoid the “point and wave” technique when referencing visual content
- Provide transcripts for audio content where possible; identify speakers and include non-verbal audio where relevant

We often think of ASL as a default “accessibility” feature, but few UBC students currently request ASL interpretation. CfA is here to support specific video and audio requests; we can also help you work with UBC for technological support.

Upcoming Workshops

- April 6; 12pm to 1pm: [Creating Accessible Open Educational Resources \(OER\): Tables, Figures and Interactive Content](#)
- April 25; 11am to 12pm: [Creating Accessible Open Educational Resources \(OER\): OER Tools and Platforms](#)



Thank You!

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Some slides were modified by previous presentation
co-developed with UBC partners.