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# Remixing an Open Educational Resource: A Case Study of the Uncommon “R”

By Lusiella Fazzino and Julie Turley

## Abstract

Open educational resources address the crisis college students face purchasing textbooks. Although academic librarians play a prominent role implementing the open educational resource solution, by engaging faculty in their use and creation, librarians could go further. At the College of New Rochelle, instruction librarians teamed up with the Scholarly Communications Librarian to revise and remix an already existing information literacy textbook. This case study outlines how an open educational resource textbook was altered and localized to reflect students’ lived reality. The textbook was used in a credit-bearing information literacy course for the College’s Liberal Arts adult education B.A. program.

## Keywords

open educational resources, localization, customization, remixing, information literacy, non-traditional students

## Author Biographies

Lusiella Fazzino is Assistant Professor and eScholarship Repository Librarian at St. John’s University in Queens, New York. She has presented on open educational resources and open pedagogy, with an interest in their intersection with information literacy. Julie Turley is a Reader Services Librarian at Kingsborough Community College, City University of New York. Currently a member of her campus’s open educational resources team, she has presented on both open educational resources and open pedagogy. In addition to open educational resources, Professor Turley’s research interests include Rock-N-Roll memoirs, gender and heavy metal music, and “secret” music histories; to this end, she is at work on a book-length oral history of the Salt Lake City 1980s-era punk scene.

## Acknowledgements

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generation students. We also thank our Library Dean, Ana Fontoura, for an environment where the remixing project could take root. Most importantly, we thank our esteemed colleagues, Michael Kahn, Natalia Sucre and Marie Octobre for their acumen, dedication to the students and perseverance. Without their collaboration, the project would not have been possible. Finally, we thank Alexandra Fernandes Hall who assisted with the editing and layout.

## Introduction

In order to best support their socio-economically challenged adult learners at the College of New Rochelle's (CNR) New York City-based satellite campuses (and one in New Rochelle), librarians teaching a credit-bearing information literacy course decided to remix an already existing open educational resource. This free online textbook was the product of a collaboration by librarians at the State University of New York (SUNY), Albany. Brand new to the concept of open educational resources (OER), the New York City cohort deemed that a collaborative remix—instead of building a brand new open textbook from scratch—would be most feasible, particularly because of a lack of resources at CNR. The type of funding available to their colleagues at public institutions like SUNY and the City University of New York, which received \$8 million dollars for OER development and implementation, did not exist at CNR (Straumsheim, 2017). This case study will outline how the CNR cohort of teaching librarians took the initiative to find an existing OER and remix it after a semester of reusing it in its original form. The librarians' initial motives for remixing were cost savings and first day access, freeing students from financial burdens, particularly acute for urban-based learners. The lasting effect has been a pedagogical shift where consideration for the student population's ethnological and localized learning needs, typically diverse in urban environs, are meaningfully favored and preserved.

In order to provide the necessary background for this case study, the authors utilize Wiley's (n.d.) definition of OER as licensed to provide users with free and perpetual permission to engage in the following activities:

1. Retain is the right to make, own, and control copies of the content (e.g., download, duplicate, store, and manage).
2. Reuse is the right to use the content in a wide range of ways (e.g., in a class, in a study group, on a Web site, in a video).
3. Revise is the right to adapt, adjust, modify, or alter the content itself (e.g., translate the content into another language).
4. Remix is the right to combine the original or revised content with other material to create something new (e.g., incorporate the content into a mashup).

5. Redistribute is the right to share copies of the original content, your revisions, or your remixes with others (e.g., give a copy of the content to a friend). (Creative Commons, 2017)

The reason for introducing OER to a Research and Information Literacy course across all CNR campuses was to save students money. Although the assigned textbook, William Badke's *Research Strategies: Finding Your Way through the Information Fog*, cost \$20—a seemingly nominal expense—CNR students found that price was a burden. For this reason, the cohort librarians would routinely post book chapters, within copyright limitations, in the College's course management system. Anecdotally, most students found any textbook costs burdensome and they sought ways to borrow and share textbooks—or not use a textbook at all. Additionally, the Scholarly Communications Librarian (ScholComm Librarian) in this librarian cohort wanted to bring the concept of OER to CNR. This mission would not only augment the respective toolkits of cohort members, it would also significantly support the needs of CNR's students.

## Literature Review

### Librarians as Leaders

Academic librarians have long wrestled with how to assert the relevancy of the library on campus and their role in the larger campus community. With increased attention and resources devoted to OER in higher education nationally, librarians have found a way they can take the lead and/or instigate powerful partnerships in campus-wide OER initiatives. Yet, literature covering how librarians have led the OER movement remains scant. One of the central facets of the librarians' OER role is raising awareness and promoting how OER can benefit the entire campus community. Indeed, academic librarians can make what Colson, Elijah, and Robin (2017) call a “business case” for how OER increase “college affordability and student success” (p. 285). OER activities, in general, demonstrate the value of libraries and librarians at their respective institutions.

Librarians interested in OER are taking advantage of a “culture shift towards innovation and collaboration” while fulfilling their traditional tripartite duties of “scholarship, teaching and service” (Walz, 2017, p. 148). Limited awareness and skepticism regarding the quality of “free resources” are two areas in which librarians can concentrate their efforts (p. 150). Librarians can also spearhead institutional membership in the Open Textbook Network, a United States-based national consortium of higher education institutions advocating for OER in general and supporting the Open Textbook Library in particular (“About...”, n.d.). When faculty peruse and review OER textbooks in the Open Textbook Library, they not

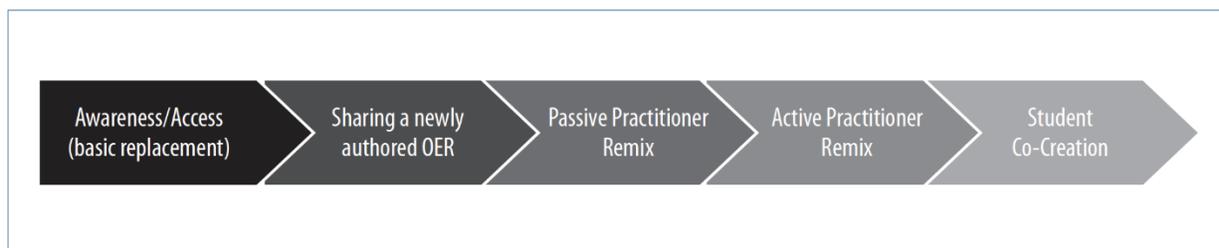
only receive monetary compensation for their efforts, they see how the quality of OER match that of traditional textbooks (Goodsett, Loomis, & Miles, 2016, p. 341). Hess, Nann, and Riddle (2016) assert that preservation of OER repositories is an area in which librarians can “help” (p. 130). The fact that librarians are often the only faculty members on campus versed in issues of copyright and licensing only underscores the strength of librarians as leaders in the OER movement (Walz, 2017, p. 153). Librarians can draw upon their historical roles as information professionals who know where to find “appropriate open resources in the vast sea of available material” (Hess et al., 2016, p. 132).

### Remixing an OER

The potential of revising or remixing an already existing OER and creating a publicly-shared resource which meets the needs of a class has not yet been well documented in library literature. Indeed, over the course of presenting OER in conference settings (Connecticut, New York City, upstate New York and Louisiana), the authors of this article found that conference attendees had an awareness of OER but were unfamiliar with the term remixing.

Creative Commons (2017) defines revise as the legal right to adapt, adjust, modify, or alter content. Remixing is the legal right to combine the original or revised content with other content to create something new. This definition dovetails with Wiley (n.d.) by defining a remix as a blending of once discrete elements so that the boundaries of each element disappear (Creative Commons, 2017). In his continuum of open practice, in Figure 1 below, Stagg (2014) delineates OER remixing into passive and active:

A passive remix occurs when a practitioner locates a single artefact, which aligns well (but not completely) to their learning and teaching needs, and the decision is made to localize the content. [Active remix occurs when], rather than changes based on substitution, multiple open resources are blended into a new resource. (p. 159–160)



*Figure 1.* Continuum of Open Practice (Stagg, 2014) [CC-BY 3.0 Es](#)

A commonly used term in music, remixing occurs when “a variant of an original recording (as of a song) is made by rearranging or adding to the original” (“Remix”, 2018). In Internet culture, the term “remix” has evolved to apply to images, video, writing and even recipes. The authors of this article and their colleagues did not create a “mashup” by combining the original work with other content to create something new, as Wiley (n.d.) suggests in his definition of remixing. The authors consider the process they undertook with SUNY’s *Information Literacy User’s Guide: An Open Online Textbook* as “remixing,” in line with the vernacular term “remix” and Stagg’s concept of “passive remix,” in that a single artefact was located and its content localized for CNR students (Stagg, 2014, p.159).

### Rate of OER Textbook Remix is Low

Notwithstanding the freedoms that some of the Creative Commons’ licenses provide to remix already existing OER, remixing remains an uncommon occurrence. In 2013, Wiley, Bliss, and McEwen reported, “there is little empirical evidence that people actually exercise the additional 4R permissions,” the ability to reuse, revise, remix and redistribute OER (p. 18). Amiel (2013) contends, “remixing is still not a mainstream practice in education and the barriers and limitations to remix are not well known” (p. 1). In more recent literature, revision of OER continues to be infrequent unless meant for translation (Harper, Hilton, & Rao, 2017; Mishra, 2017). Ultimately, “OER have been valued more for their ease and practicality of use (‘as is’) rather than their ability to be remixed into a critically engaged set of resources” (Hodgkinson-Williams & Trotter, 2018, p. 215).

In the U.K., Beaven (2013) found that although language teachers do make changes to the resources they select from their repository (LORO), those changes were deemed “very personal”, “to fit their own teaching styles”, and were rarely shared again (p. 4). Van Acker, Van Duuren, Kreijns, and Vermeulen (2013) state that if [teachers] “believe that their contributions will provide an added value,” they are more amenable to share their OER contributions (p.179). The CNR library team thought it beneficial to share and present their remixed OER to the wider professional community, anticipating that outlining the remix process would capacitate other teachers, librarians and faculty to implement a subsequent remix process themselves.

Literature cites many challenges reusing and remixing OER. Armellini and Nie (2013) suggest that “a lack of technical and digital literacy skills” as well as a “limited understanding of copyright and licensing issues” are barriers in reuse of OER (p. 17). Ross (2015) adds that making adaptations of OER are further complicated by a “lack of knowledge” of what “open means” (p. 9). Wiley et al. (2013)

contends that there is “no guarantee” that those wishing to “refactor” OER “will be sufficiently competent in the technological or pedagogical skills that are necessary to make the needed changes” (p. 17). Editing is also mentioned as a potential obstacle (Ross, 2015 quoting Armellini et al., 2013). Blyth (2017) contends that “many OER are difficult to adapt” especially when in [portable document format] PDF (p. 5). Further, Amiel (2013) cautions:

Though OER opens the possibility of revision and remix, one should be aware of the many efforts and decisions associated with such practices. Issues of licensing led us to make complex choices in defining what to use and how to remix resources. Attribution can become a complex task as issues of authorship are on shifting ground...[f]inally, we have found that technical issues, particularly concerning the use of open standards and editable sources, to be of the essence. Without attention to these technical concerns the collaborative and participatory practices of remix can be cumbersome and problematic. (p.139)

Contrary to literature, the authors believe that these concerns can be mitigated. There are many free online resources for Creative Commons’ licensing and even a Canvas-based online course to earn a Creative Commons Certificate. YouTube tutorials instructing in the use of editing software are also prevalent. Finally, librarians can prove useful in addressing concerns about reusing OER or remixing them. It may be important to note that none of the librarians in the cohort had any experience in either licensing or OER before undertaking the remix.

### Localization and Customization

An underestimated benefit of OER is the ability to customize and localize the textbook to suit a particular need or population. As early as 2011, Ivins coined the term “localization” as the “customization of content to better suit learning” (p. 35). “The measures employed to make OER useful attempt to pay particular regard to situating content within local needs, local culture, local geography, local technologies, local infrastructures and local issues” (p. 35). The remixing cohort of librarians found that even the slightest effort to modify a text to express local and regional norms, as in an urban area, was well received by students.

The editing and customization of OER to create personal learning materials and for use in local contexts is recognized and welcomed in literature (Mishra, 2017; Ross, 2015). In a study of Croatian academic institutions, the majority of the respondents “mostly (60%) or strongly (17%) agreed that: Most OER needs [customization] and localization before use in the classroom” (Krelja, 2016, p. 139). In a Nigerian university, a French professor asked her Nigerian students “to replace American cultural referents found in the textbook with African equivalents” (Blyth, 2017, p. 9

quoting Blyth 2012). Onaifo (2016) supports the notion that students are “motivated to use OER that have local and cultural relevance” (p. 232). “The most conspicuous contexts for [localization] are those which are culturally and geographically distant”... [are locales] of “low-income”, [and where] teachers work in “resource-deprived” areas (Kurek, 2016, p. 3).

An urban library or educational institution certainly qualifies as a scenario where the localization of OER would be fitting. The power of remixing as an educational tool can be easily overlooked because of the excitement surrounding cost savings for students. However, remixing allows educators to engage with hegemony, pedagogy and student-centered learning (DeRosa & Robinson, 2017; Hodgkinson-Williams et al., 2018; Kurek, 2016). The ability to alter materials for and with students creates a vested interest in the material which can lead to intentional learning. Further, DeRosa et al. (2017), concur that:

If we think of OER as just free digital stuff, as products, we can surely lower costs for students... [b]ut we largely miss out on the opportunity to empower our students, to help them see content as something they can curate and create, and to help them see themselves as contributing members to the public marketplace of ideas. (p.122)

The remix experience is an opportunity to delve deeper into a student’s unique instructional needs, beyond a superficial and general assessment. Adapting and remixing encourages a more sensitized and individualized approach on the educator’s part (Cronin, 2017; Hodgkinson-Williams & Arinto, 2017; Jimes, Weiss, & Keep, 2013). As this cohort of librarians found, such sensitivity leads to improved cultural competence. Cultural sensitivity is recognized and discussed in the international arena when making materials locally relevant for developing countries (Hodgkinson-Williams et al., 2018; Kurek, 2016; Oates & Hashimi, 2016; Onaifo, 2016). However, the power of remixing OER is not harnessed or explored as a possible bridge for cultural differences between national, regional or local areas and populations. During the remix process, the librarians found that diversity and inclusion challenges could be alleviated by altering the text to reflect local and non-dominant experiences.

CNR’s cohort of remixing librarians identified in the original OER text the stark contrast between content created for students in the rural environment of SUNY Albany in upstate New York versus the content that would better suit the urban dwelling students of New York City’s five boroughs. Each population has its own unique cultural reference points, which can be used to enhance learning about information literacy. Modifying content to OER, which was CNR specific further engaged students and encouraged their involvement in local campus events. Not

recognizing the value in connecting students' lived reality and learning needs with OER remix are to be remiss of its pedagogical potential through greater cultural competence.

## Case Study

Until 2019, CNR was a Catholic college in New Rochelle, New York, founded by the Ursuline tradition in 1904. In 2014, CNR was awarded the First in the World grant from the U.S. Department of Education, aimed to assist institutions of higher education that served among others, adult learners, students of color and "first generation" students. As part of the grant, six Learning Commons librarians and the ScholComm Librarian were hired to staff six locations of CNR's School of New Resources (SNR) and oversee the creation of an institutional repository. SNR, a school within the College, was designed particularly for adult learners in 1972 in order to address the "needs of adult learners living in a complex urban world" ("School...", 2014). When the grant was awarded in 2015, SNR students, who met the age minimum of 21, could choose to attend one of five campuses in New York City's five boroughs: Bedford-Stuyvesant (Brooklyn), Coop City (Bronx), DC-37/Municipal Workers Union Offices (Manhattan), Harlem (Manhattan), and the South Bronx. A sixth SNR campus was located on the College's home campus in New Rochelle, New York. SNR students resided primarily in urban areas, were a mix of adult learners and first generation college attendees, and were from lower economic strata.

<b>By Campus</b>						
<b>By Race-Ethnicity</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Avg Age</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Avg Age</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Avg Age</b>
<b>Total SNR</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>37.9</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>38.0</b>	<b>1709</b>	<b>37.9</b>
<b>Brooklyn</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>37.2</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>40.4</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>37.5</b>
Non-Resident Alien	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Asian	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Black/African American	52%	37.8	60%	41.6	53%	38.2
Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Hispanic/Latino	4%	34.7	0%	0.0	3%	34.7
Two or More Races	1%	35.7	3%	42.9	1%	37.2
Unknown	42%	36.7	30%	36.9	41%	36.7
White	1%	37.9	7%	44.5	1%	41.2
<b>Co-op City</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>40.3</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>37.6</b>
Non-Resident Alien	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Asian	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Black/African American	44%	37.5	48%	47.4	45%	38.3
Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Hispanic/Latino	8%	34.5	19%	38.2	9%	35.1
Two or More Races	1%	49.1	0%	0.0	1%	49.1
Unknown	45%	37.4	33%	31.3	45%	37.1
White	1%	46.8	0%	0.0	1%	46.8
<b>DC -37</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>42.3</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>43.3</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>42.4</b>
Non-Resident Alien	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Asian	2%	38.3	0%	0.0	2%	38.3
Black/African American	39%	43.2	31%	48.9	39%	43.5
Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1%	39.0	0%	0.0	1%	39.0
Hispanic/Latino	10%	39.0	31%	35.2	11%	38.3
Two or More Races	1%	39.2	0%	0.0	1%	39.2
Unknown	43%	42.8	31%	46.4	43%	42.9
White	3%	41.2	8%	40.4	4%	41.1
<b>New Rochelle</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>38.1</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>37.8</b>
Non-Resident Alien	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Asian	1%	26.2	0%	0.0	1%	26.2
Black/African American	45%	37.7	50%	35.4	46%	37.3
Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Hispanic/Latino	10%	38.7	20%	34.5	12%	37.6
Two or More Races	4%	56.2	3%	37.0	4%	53.5
Unknown	29%	36.6	20%	38.4	27%	36.8
White	11%	37.5	7%	40.3	10%	37.8
<b>Rosa Parks</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>36.6</b>
Non-Resident Alien	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Asian	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Black/African American	29%	37.3	20%	35.9	27%	37.1
Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Hispanic/Latino	1%	42.1	0%	0.0	1%	42.1
Two or More Races	1%	54.6	0%	0.0	1%	54.6
Unknown	70%	36.3	80%	35.0	71%	36.1
White	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
<b>John Cardinal O'Connor</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>37.1</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>37.2</b>
Non-Resident Alien	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Asian	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Black/African American	39%	38.4	34%	36.6	38%	38.2
Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0
Hispanic/Latino	8%	37.4	7%	44.7	8%	38.3
Two or More Races	1%	30.3	0%	0.0	1%	30.3
Unknown	51%	36.1	59%	37.4	52%	36.3
White	1%	41.6	0%	0.0	1%	41.6

*Table 1.* School of New Resources' population (Fazzino, Kahn, Minchillo, & Octobre, 2016)

Among other duties, Learning Commons librarians at SNR were assigned to teach at least two sections of a two-credit, 12-week-long Research and Information Literacy class. A syllabus created by a tenured faculty librarian was distributed to all grant-funded Learning Commons librarians over the summer before the semester. Learning Commons librarians had a choice of two traditional textbooks to assign, both available for purchase via Amazon.

Students who historically enrolled in SNR are the perfect fit for the First in the World grant, which was designed to address:

Widespread challenges in postsecondary education for students who are at risk for not persisting in and completing postsecondary programs, including, but not limited to, adult learners, working students, part-time students, students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, students with disabilities, and first-generation students. (First in the world, 2016)

For this reason, CNR urban campus librarians were uniquely poised to spearhead the introduction of OER in this program. OER were flexible and fluid enough to accommodate the vigorous educational and economic demands of CNR students attending the SNR.

## Methodology

One of the roles of the new ScholComm Librarian was to familiarize the CNR community with the concept of open access. In the second year of the grant, she spoke with her fellow librarians about presenting at CNR's Third Annual Imagination, Inquiry & Innovation Institute in October 2015. The ScholComm Librarian presented on the topics of open access and OER, introducing them as alternatives to traditional paywalled databases and costly textbooks.

Shortly after presenting, the ScholComm Librarian became aware of SUNY's *Information Literacy User's Guide: An Open Online Textbook*. The SUNY open textbook is modeled after the United Kingdom and Ireland-based Society of College, National and University Libraries' (SCONUL) Seven Pillars of Information Literacy, which emphasize the ability to identify, scope, plan, gather, evaluate, manage and present information. This is analogous to the Framework for Information Literacy, the Association of College and Research Libraries' (2015) codified set of interrelated information literacy concepts.

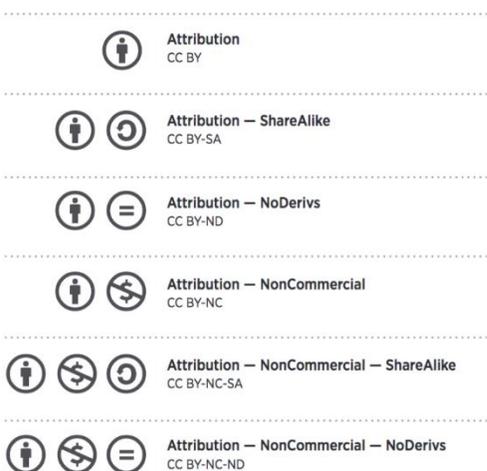
The ScholComm Librarian suggested to her colleagues that OER be used in the Reference and Information Literacy class taught by the College of New Rochelle librarians to the School of New Resources students. Although not a required course, this class was the first formal introduction that SNR students receive regarding

research methodology. Research and Information Literacy was designed to work in conjunction with the curriculum designed for the adult learners in the School of New Resources and its core seminars such as Urban Community and Human Body (Fazzino et al., 2016).

Four of the six Learning Commons librarians and two faculty librarians were amenable to adopting the SUNY open textbook. Primarily, librarians knew that it would provide a savings to SNR students who could forego purchasing the usual textbook. In the spring of 2016, those six CNR librarians began using the SUNY open textbook in their Research and Information Literacy classes. Reporting positive results from both the faculty librarians and Learning Commons librarians, the ScholComm Librarian was motivated to take an additional step and suggest to her colleagues that this open text be remixed. First, the ScholComm Librarian had to make sure that the open textbook allowed for a remix since some of the Creative Commons' licenses do not grant such use.

The Creative Commons BY-NC-SA license signified that the original authors had to be attributed; the remixed textbook would be kept for non-commercial use; and, that the remixed textbook had to maintain the same open license as the original work. In other words, a remix was possible. The Creative Commons' licensing schemes provide particular uses for works that may already have copyright.

The Creative Commons BY, or "Attribution," license is the most liberal of the licenses and allows users to "distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon your work, even commercially, as long as they credit you for the original creation" (Creative Commons, n.d.). The Creative Commons BY-SA, or "Attribution-ShareAlike," license transfers the same rights as the Creative Commons BY license but requires that the new work also use the same Creative Commons BY-SA license. The Creative Commons BY-ND, or "Attribution-NoDerivs," license permits redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, as long as it is passed along unchanged and in whole, with credit to you. (Creative Commons, n.d.). The Creative Commons BY-NC, or "Attribution-NonCommercial," license permits others to remix, tweak, and build upon your work non-commercially, and although their new works must also acknowledge you and be non-commercial, they don't have to license their derivative works on the same terms (Creative Commons, n.d.). A Creative Commons BY-NC-SA, or "Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike," license allows one to remix, tweak, and build upon your work non-commercially, as long as they credit you and license their new creations under the identical terms (Creative Commons, n.d.). The Creative Commons BY-NC-ND, or "Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs," license is the most restrictive license, only allowing others to download your works and share them with others as long as they credit you, but they cannot change them in any way or use them commercially (Creative Commons, n.d.).



*Figure 2.* Creative Commons Licenses (Creative Commons, n.d.)

Once the librarian cohort understood the implications of the license that the upstate New York textbook had—one free of any commercial interest or motive—they were enthusiastic to customize the text for SNR students at CNR. Again, at this point, the central motivation of the cohort regarding using OER was to save their students money.

### The First Iteration: Summer 2016

At the end of spring semester 2016, the ScholComm Librarian informally determined there was an interest in remixing SUNY’s OER already in use among librarians both inside and outside the cohort, and chapters were then assigned to each librarian for a remix. With still emerging knowledge as to what was required in an openly licensed OER remix, each librarian tentatively perused their assigned chapters, each addressing the “Seven Pillars,” ranging from “Identifying Your Information Need” to “Developing Research Strategies” to “Organizing Information Effectively and Ethically.”

By early June, the project seemed to be lagging. Many in the cohort felt hesitant when confronted with changing text already codified by other authors. However, despite competing projects and responsibilities, there was renewed interest in completing the remixed open text. The project resumed over the course of six weeks in July and August, each librarian committed to work on assigned chapters that would ensure a completely remixed textbook by the start of Fall semester. The ScholComm Librarian continued to oversee the project and final drafts of all chapters from each librarian were due by mid-August. The original SUNY Albany PDF had been exported into Microsoft Word using Adobe Acrobat Pro DC so that the final draft of each chapter would also be completed in Word and emailed to the

ScholComm Librarian by the due date. The project avoided using Google Docs because of formatting problems that would result when converting Microsoft Word to Google Docs and vice versa. Each librarian saved their chapters as a Microsoft Word document with their initials, chapter number and the beginning of the chapter name.

In order to achieve one of the initial goals of providing first day access to this remixed and hopefully, improved OER, the ScholComm Librarian immediately began editing the remixed chapters and assembled them into one Word document. Turnaround continued to be swift, and just a few days later the document was emailed to the College's digitization manager, who edited the text one more time in Word and converted it to PDF. Using Adobe Acrobat Pro DC seemed to skew the design, unfortunately, and the ensuing troubleshooting and reformatting of the new PDF, a collaborative effort on one shared campus, New Rochelle, took more time than anticipated.

In an effort to localize the text from a design point of view, using a free and user-friendly web-based photo editing tool—"Pixlr Express"—the ScholComm Librarian made sure that images of the various SNR urban campuses of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Harlem, Manhattan, along with the Westchester County campus in New Rochelle, appeared on the remixed version's cover. A metaphor for the collaborative remix, she created a collage of edited photos that united all the campuses.

Prior to the Fall semester, the librarian cohort had a final version of the remixed OER in PDF. They then integrated it into their respective online course shells even before the first day of the semester. The liberty of the Creative Commons licensing scheme allowed for effortless mapping of the upstate text's SCOUNL Seven Pillars of Information Literacy to a syllabus that was based on the Association of College and Research Libraries' Framework for Information Literacy.

While each member of the cohort worked separately to remix and revise one OER textbook, the methods taken regarding "Uncommon 'R'" were not uniform. Initially, there was a timidity to altering the text as notions of traditional copyright prevailed. After several brainstorming sessions, via conference call, some librarians in the cohort thought the upstate librarians' original choices for proper names and places did not speak to the School of New Resource's students, and decided to swap them for proper names that would localize and urbanize the OER. Related to this were remix choices that resulted in replacing suburban examples in the text with ones that weren't only decidedly urban and city centric, but directly related to students' noted interests and concerns. A specific example of this was the librarian who replaced a chapter anecdote on fracking—an arguably upstate issue—with

gentrification, a generally urban concern, with which students in his classes were very familiar.

One librarian in the cohort expanded her chapter by inserting a new section on how to read scholarly articles, identifying this skill as extremely important for SNR students. Many students were encountering peer-reviewed work for the very first time. The same librarian discovered that the memes she created from popular culture images gleaned from the Web would be impossible to use in the remix due to copyright concerns. Other remixes to SUNY's OER had to do with embedding content that was more practice oriented and interactive, leading to improved student engagement. At the same time, others among the cohort took a more tentative approach, merely copy editing their chapter to make it leaner and hence a faster and simpler read for their overburdened and often time-challenged students. One librarian reported that a student in her class was surprised and impressed that her instructor would make the effort to create a text uniquely for her and her classmates.

A few members of the cohort, inspired by the openness inherent in OER, pushed their own teaching styles in an open manner. One librarian remixed the text in an effort to reflect her own personal teaching style and her students' learning style. Rather than focusing on the curriculum, the students' academic background was taken into consideration. In her chapter on presenting information, the ScholComm Librarian wished to inform SNR students of local options for displaying their work. Among other imperatives, the First in the World grant required the creation of an electronic peer-reviewed journal, *Serviam*, specifically highlighting undergraduate student research, student scholarship that would be added to the repository, [DigitalCommons@CNR](mailto:DigitalCommons@CNR). In her remix, the ScholComm Librarian altered the text to make sure Research and Information Literacy students knew about this opportunity, as well as another CNR event: the annual SNR poster session, "Journey to Ways of Knowing Poster Session," where SNR students could display their work. Knowing that presenting was an integral part of the SNR curriculum the ScholComm Librarian also introduced presentation tools—Prezi, Microsoft Sway and PowToons—that are alternatives to the more traditional PowerPoint.

Overall, the process of remixing allowed the cohort of librarians to exercise cultural competence by altering the text in ways they considered far more meaningful for their particular geographic location, institution and diverse student population. Now that a remix, which satisfied everyone in the cohort, was complete, proper attribution had to be made. The cohort followed best practices for attribution found at the Creative Commons Wiki site. In addition to satisfying the Creative Commons licensing rules for a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA—the license the SUNY textbook carried—the original work's title, author, source and type of license had to be

referenced and the kind of modification that was made also had to be indicated. In this instance, it was decided to use “a derivative of” to indicate the type of change that was made. Creative Commons reminds us to not make it “too complicated” and make sure that the “attribution is reasonable” (“Best...”, 2018). After our remix, readers would now find the following attribution in one of the text’s opening pages (Fazzino, Kahn, Marie Octobre, Sucre, & Julie Turley, 2017):

This work, the *Information Literacy User’s Guide: A Remixed Open, Online Textbook*, is a derivative of the *Information Literacy User’s Guide: An Open, Online Textbook* by Trudi Jacobson, Greg Bobish, Deborah Bernnard, Daryl Bullis, Jenna Hecker, Irina Holden, Allison Hosier, and Tor Loney used under Creative Commons BY-NC-SA. The *Information Literacy User’s Guide: A Remixed Open, Online Textbook* is licensed under Creative Commons BY-NC-SA by Lusiella Fazzino, Michael Kahn, Marie Octobre, Natalia Sucre, and Julie Turley. (p.4)

The final version of the remixed text was now complete; the last step was to add it to DigitalCommons@CNR. Now that the remixed textbook was in the institutional repository, users all over the world could download it. As of this writing, the remixed textbook has been downloaded, from the CNR institutional repository approximately 2,300 times. While the majority of downloads are from the East Coast, all seven continents of the world are represented in download statistics.

### The Second Iteration: Summer 2017

During the Summer of 2017, the group decided their remixed OER could be even further improved with some minimal additions and updates. The librarian cohort made minor edits and one librarian reworked the graphics for all the chapters. To improve visual clarity, she changed the flowchart to bulleted points and inserted an open image of an actual pillar, representing the Seven Pillars of Information Literacy.



*Figure 3. Pillar Image for Second Iteration (Gottsabend, 2012)*

This librarian used Canva, a free design and publishing tool, to create new templates for the entire textbook, which she plugged into all the chapters. The ScholComm Librarian then took the graphics, inserted them into the existing PDF file using Adobe Acrobat Pro DC and updated the text.

In the second iteration, the cohort contemplated a remix textbook that incorporates open pedagogy. For example, a curriculum that would require students collaboratively contribute to the textbook, co-authoring and remixing alongside their instructors. The instruction librarians also realized that there could be an increased openness in the design of the course based on their experience with the flexibility of the textbook's license, text and structure. Since the textbook was looser in structure and more open to external influences like local cultural contexts, the class itself began to take shape in a similar way for some of the cohort. Using popular culture examples, like topical YouTube videos, rather than standard textbook illustrations engaged students on a new level.

With this project, the authors moved naturally into the realm of open educational practices and open pedagogy. One librarian became concerned with empowering students by making them content creators and increasing participation of

underrepresented groups in Wikipedia. She contacted WikiEd and embedded her Research and Information Literacy course into the WikiEd shell. The librarian was able to take her experience of remixing and use it as a launching pad for bringing open pedagogy into her classroom.

## Results and Feedback

Formal assessment of OER success was not a priority. The cohort's central concern of getting a free online textbook to their students quickly was achieved. Any other goals were deemed too complicated and ultimately problematic: Given the range of student assessment imperatives integral to the federal grant, there was a general reticence among the cohort to submit SNR students to yet another assessment. When considering their students' needs, cohort librarians—like many librarians employed in densely urban areas—also found that their mission often extended beyond the boundaries of conventional librarianship. Indeed, the respective situations of the SNR students—anecdotally, food insecurity, homelessness, single parenthood, startlingly high rates of deaths in the family, and providing care for one or more generations of children—often required the librarians in the cohort to act as ersatz social workers and counselors, if only until they could make an appropriate professional referral. Out of sensitivity to and concern for these students, assessment of the OER textbook project was entirely informal, growing organically from discussions among cohort members about how individual students responded to the fact that the required textbook was free, as well as certain elements of the remix.

In general, the cohort librarians reported that their students were relieved to avoid spending funds on a textbook for Research and Information Literacy and were excited to have first day access, given that the OER textbook link was available in each instructor's Canvas course even before the first day of the semester. Furthermore, the textbook was easily downloadable and as students seem to prefer print to electronic copies, librarians reported some of their students printed out all 75 pages of the OER, often as soon as they opened it up in respective classrooms. Because students who used the original version of the OER were not assessed, a comparison of how the remixed version affected student success could not be constructed.

## Conclusion

The librarian cohort felt positively about the OER project, which spanned two academic years. The project began simply—with the desire to provide socio-economically challenged students with first-day access to a free online textbook. It eventually evolved into a complex collaborative project, compelled by more robust

goals: to provide not just a free online textbook, but one that responded directly to the socio-economic demographics, values and concerns of students that were local to urban areas, whom the cohort served and had come to know well. To achieve this higher goal, which wholly depended on wielding the “Uncommon ‘R,’” the librarian cohort had to overcome their own fears and concerns about making often-dramatic changes to another cohorts’ already written textbook. Given this context, formal assessment of students, grappling with a range of serious life challenges, was not a priority. However, the librarians in the cohort reported informally that once the traditional textbook was swapped out for an OER, students were more likely to read required pages for class on time. Completing a collaborative mixing of OER also expanded the cohort librarians’ respective professional toolkits: from open pedagogy and localization to greater cultural competence, where student-centered learning was broadened. The cohort went on to present the OER textbook project, as well as open pedagogical practices inspired by this project, at a variety of library conferences. Indeed, cohort members continue, in other professional capacities outside of the federal grant, to advocate for and increase participation in (as of this writing) the still uncommon task of remixing OER to better ensure student engagement and success, especially students who need the most support.

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