

Work Sample	BCcampus Open Textbook Marketing Plan
Name:	Tori (Victoria) Klassen, ABC, Communications Director
Organization:	BCcampus
Time Period:	February 12, 2014 - June 30, 2014
Skills showcased:	Communication Management

Summary:

To encourage adoption of free Open Textbooks in the BCcampus repository among B.C. public post-secondary educators, thus saving students money over traditional textbooks, we created an online toolkit and sent out a package of print collateral and promotional items to encourage educators to consider using open educational resources.

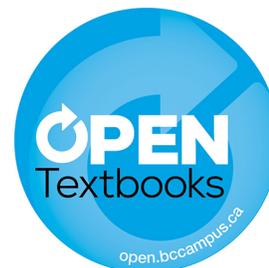
Association overview:

BCcampus is a publicly funded organization that uses information technology to connect the expertise, programs, and resources of all B.C. post-secondary institutions under a collaborative service delivery framework. BCcampus is a champion for Open Educational Resources (OER); we advocate making educational content, especially content created using public funds, openly-licensed (using Creative Commons licenses) so they can be freely shared, re-mixed, and redistributed for maximum impact.

BCcampus is organized on a cross-functional work teams basis; the team for this marketing communications plan was: Tori Klassen (Director, Communications), Mary Burgess (Director, Open Education), Barb Murphy (graphic and web designer), Clint Lalonde (Manager, Open Education).

Need:

The B.C. Open Textbook Project is funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education, government of British Columbia, and BCcampus is tasked with managing the program. A goal of the program is to provide flexible and affordable access to higher education resources in B.C. by making available 40 openly-licensed textbooks aligned with the most highly enrolled first and second year subject areas in B.C. public post secondary institutions. However, educators in B.C.'s higher education system are largely unaware they have the option of assigning free, openly licensed textbooks for their courses. Many who are aware of their existence are reluctant to assign Open Textbooks because of concerns over quality and relevance. There is a perception that free, open resources are of poorer quality than traditional textbooks.



Opportunity:

We wanted to reinforce two ideas through the marketing materials:

- 1) The unique value of this product is the control the instructor has over the textbook: educators are free to adapt any portion of an open textbook, to use, adapt and re-use as they see fit; this is very unlike traditionally-published textbooks. We have found this climate of open sharing lends itself to the formation of communities around subject areas. Open Textbooks are adapted, curated, and created and by educators and reviewed by experts to ensure they contribute to successful learning outcomes. By adopting OER, instructors are not just assigning a text; they are joining a growing movement to transform higher education.
- 2) Instructors can save their students hundreds of dollars by assigning a free, open textbook. For instance, an introductory physics textbook sells for \$222.00 at a university bookstore, but BCcampus has a peer-reviewed, up-to-date introductory physics text available for free download.

Primary Audience:

There are tens of thousands of such educators in the B.C. public post-secondary system. Instructors for each of the thousands of courses taught each year are responsible for choosing the learning resources, including textbooks assigned to their students. We could not reach all professors, sessional lecturers and instructors with the limited budget available. Therefore, we targeted the following audiences who have a direct influence on instructors in B.C.'S 25 public post-secondary institutions:

- Teaching and Learning Centres
- Articulation Committees
- Vice Presidents Academic offices; Deans and Program chairs
- Librarians.

Articulation committees, Vice-Presidents Academic, and Librarians were well covered by the Open Textbooks team in face-to-face meetings, the Open Textbooks oversight committee, and the BCcampus Strategic Council. Therefore, our primary audience for this marketing plan was Teaching and Learning Centres.

Audience preferences:

Educators in B.C.'s higher education system are largely unaware they have the option of assigning free, openly-licensed textbooks for their courses. Many who are aware of their existence are reluctant to assign Open Textbooks because of concerns over quality and relevance. There is a perception that free, open resources are of poorer quality than traditional textbooks. However, most instructors are aware that as little as 60% of their students will purchase a required textbook because of cost concerns, and that not having a textbooks leads to poorer learning outcomes. Therefore, they welcome the chance to correct errors or outdated information and contribute the expertise to make learning resources better.

When post-secondary instructors need help with their teaching and learning practices, or in planning their courses, most of them have access to a library and a teaching and learning centre on campus that employs instructional designers, technologists and other experts. When those teaching and learning centres are made aware of how OER enhances academic freedom, and where to find OER, they are willing to share that information with instructors looking for learning resources.

Goal:

Raise awareness and encourage adoption of open textbooks made available to instructors in British Columbia post-secondary institutions through the B.C. Open Textbook Project.

Objective:

Have each of the 13 textbooks on OpenEd.bccampus.ca that scored 4 or higher in the review stage (as of January 31, 2014) assigned in at least one course in a B.C. public post-secondary institution for the fall 2014 semester.

Solution Overview:

BCcampus Communications Team developed an Open Textbooks Tool Kit to send to instructors through Teaching and Learning Centres, supported by speaking engagements, social media engagements, and direct marketing through the OpenEd and BCcampus web sites.

The toolkit (mailed as hard copies and available online) printed collateral and promotional items for the Centres to disseminate to instructors to give them basic information about what open textbooks are available for download and ready to assign to students.

Tactics:

- **Web site:** the Open Textbooks repository and information are published the OpenEd site: open.bccampus.ca.
- **Direct mail** - physical tool kit contents:
 - Welcome letter containing a link to the online tool kit.

- Print collateral: a folding piece that opens like a book, a poster for display
- Promotional items to send as prizes or in appreciation/acknowledgement for adopters: stickers, pens, tech traps, and thumb drives.
- **Online tool kit contents:**
 - links to reviews of the 13 targeted textbooks ready for use,
 - instructions on how to adopt and adapt,
 - instructional and information videos,
 - print-ready and source files for the print collateral.
- **Award:** explore the possibility of giving an award for innovation in Open Textbooks.
- **Content Strategy:** the Open Textbooks Project features prominently in the overall BCcampus content strategy: blog posts, articles, and newsletter.
- **Social Media:** use Twitter, Facebook to let people know where to find the online toolkit.

Implementation:

Open Textbooks project staff members have been attending meetings and giving presentations to professional groups (articulation committees, conferences of instructors, librarians and administrators, etc.) since the project was announced in 2012. It was time to reinforce those face-to-face contacts with marketing materials reinforcing the messages.

The Open Textbooks Project team and the communications team developed an online information “tool kit” housed on the OpenEd web site. The tool kit gave all the information needed for an instructor to adopt and assign a textbook.

The team compiled a list of all public post-secondary institution teaching and learning centres in B.C. and their primary contacts. In many cases, the Open Textbooks Project team members have a relationship with this audience already.

April 24, 2014: [Direct marketing email](#) linking to the online toolkit was sent out at the time when most instructors are choosing texts for the fall semester. The call to action was to visit the site where the books are found, and to distribute the link to faculty teaching in the target subject areas.

Around the same time, we sent, via land mail, the physical toolkit to all the teaching and learning centre primary contacts. We wanted to reinforce the direct email and the face-to-face meetings, and recruit faculty into advocating on their own campuses for Open Textbooks in our collection. We set aside about \$2,500 for promotional items, including a branded premium item: a “tech trap.” We surmised tech-savvy educators would appreciate a “trap” to store cables, small drives, etc. as a relevant gift that would be used and talked about.

We invited decision makers from all the teaching and learning centres to a Leadership Summit June 2, 2014, a few weeks after receiving the marketing materials.

Measurement/evaluation:

To date (September 2014), six of the thirteen targeted open textbooks have been assigned to at least one class in the B.C. higher education system. However, in total, 25 textbooks from the repository have been adopted for the fall or following semester (this includes textbooks that have not been reviewed, or were reviewed but didn’t receive a mark of 4 or higher).

Self-reporting of adoptions by instructors is the primary method of tracking uptake, and we wanted to offer incentives to self-report. Anyone can download the books; unlike large textbook publishers, we don’t have the means or motivation to collect “big data” about textbooks use - therefore it is hard to tell from download statistics how the texts are being used. The team has been relying on relationship building and outreach to build trust and encourage instructors to self-report open textbook adoptions.

A short pen-and-paper survey was distributed at Leadership Summit (primary audience) on June 2, 2014, but yielded only three completed surveys. Those three were split evenly between positive,

negative and neutral assessments of the hard copy mail-out. All indicated the online toolkit was very useful.

The electronic toolkit was advertised by way of a direct email sent out April 24. That email had a 33% open rate and a 13.1% click-through rate. The Toolkit page itself, from April 23, 2014 - June 30, 2014 was the 5th-most-viewed page on the site (with 655 unique page views). Page views, as expected, spiked after the newsletter was sent April 24.

We had requests for source files of the posters and postcards so others could adapt and re-use for their own purposes, so we posted those to the Toolkit page as well.

Conclusion:

With a budget of about \$5,000, a tiny fraction of the marketing budget of the big educational publishers, spreading the word about Open Textbooks has been a huge challenge. However, by turning our challenges into opportunities, BCcampus continues to gather committed, passionate educators as champions of OER. Unlike the big traditional publishers who package learning resources into slick, off-the-shelf products, passing the cost to students, OER demands a level of involvement from educators that they may not be accustomed to.

By targeting teaching and learning centres, BCcampus is fostering a community of OER advocates who will transform this commitment into an attractive alternative. In this way, the costs of developing and maintaining quality educational resources are borne by the public education system, not by the students; and at the same time educators have more control over their learning resources. Slowly but surely, our strategy is working. By combining traditional marketing tactics with traditional community building (using new tools), OER are becoming more widespread in post-secondary education, and the goals of the B.C. Open Textbooks Project are being fulfilled.