

## What's New with OER? Updates & Events

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### OER Olympics Highlight - Second Place

During the 2021-2022 academic year, the OER Advisory Council established the annual OER Olympics to recognize faculty members who have adopted, adapted or created OER and use them in their class(es). Students, faculty and staff members, or administrators could nominate a faculty member from their institution, or faculty could nominate themselves. Quality, quantity of depth, effect of outreach, and actual/potential impact were the criteria that judges Bob Awkward, Jessica Berthisel, Karen Hines, Carolyn Michaud, and Andrea Milligan used to Evaluate submissions.

They awarded second place (silver) to Faye Reynolds, Berkshire Community College's Professor of Life Sciences. When Faye realized she could not find copyright-free images to accompany the manuals she was creating, she began the process of photographing microscopic details of various plant specimens using BCC's microbiology camera. Spending 50-60 hours a week taking photos and writing annotated descriptions of each image, Reynolds cataloged 730 images of roots, stems, leaves, tissues and more, later adding more than 400 macro images of reptiles, amphibians, birds and mammals.

Her work filled a void in copyright free biology images when she created BCC's Bioscience Image Library, which offers students and the general public free access to microscopic images of plants, animals, bacteria, fungi and more. The images are particularly useful for students studying biology, botany, zoology, histology and microbiology. This OER project impacts not only students at BCC but also thousands of students globally. She has received many emails of thanks from students around the world who rely on the digital library for study or projects, and from instructors who are grateful to have found a public domain resource that allows them to create their own Open Educational Resource textbooks and laboratory manuals. Faye stated, "it has been a thrill to talk with students and teachers from all over the world as they use this free resource to teach and learn plant science. It has been especially gratifying to see the images in online OER textbooks!"

There are now nearly 1,200 images in the collection, all within the public domain — meaning they can be used, reused, adapted or modified for any purpose, without restriction under copyright or database law. And the project continues, with microscopic images of complex tissues and organs in humans about half complete. You can view BCC's Bioscience Image Library at <https://blogs.berkshirecc.edu/bccoer/>.

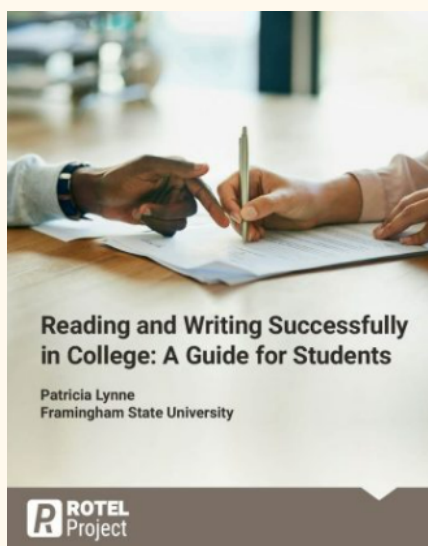
Faye also serves on the OER Taskforce at BCC and continues to be a champion for OER. With her assistance BCC was selected to attend the AAC&U's 2022-2023 Institute on Open Educational Resources. About her work Faye said, "this is just a philosophical viewpoint on education that I have – we should give a quality educational experience, including access to learning opportunities, without a lot of expense. Some things just need to be free."

## Celebrating OER Produced by ROTEL

[Remixing Open Textbooks through an Equity Lens \(ROTEL\)](#) is a grant-funded program that will provide monetary incentives for faculty at six Massachusetts public institutions to create free open educational resources (OER) textbooks and adaptations of existing open textbooks using an equity and inclusion lens, which will result in significant savings for students.

The six participating institutions include: Fitchburg State University, Framingham State University, Holyoke Community College, Northern Essex Community College, Salem State University, Springfield Technical Community College. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) is also a partner.

### ROTEL Spotlight: Patricia Lynn, Framingham State University



The Open Textbook Coordinating Council (OTCC) for the Remixing Open Textbooks through an Equity Lens (ROTEL) Grant is proud to announce the publication of their first OER text.

In this text, Lynne provides students with both principles for understanding the intellectual work of writing tasks and guided activities for improving their reading and writing skills. While the book was designed mostly with a first-semester composition course in mind, much of the text would be appropriate for a second semester course as well, including the chapters on writing process and on finding, evaluating, and using sources. This text incorporates student work – the open pedagogy assignment used to solicit student feedback and contributions is linked in the welcome to instructors.

[Reading and Writing Successfully in College: A Guide for Students](#) is now publicly available, licensed under a [Creative Commons](#)

[Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

### MA OER Hub Spotlight: A New Name!

A Hub renamed! Over the past few weeks, the Repository Committee has been in the process of updating the name of the Hub to better reflect the addition of the four-year state public institutions of Higher Education.

The process began with a call for ideas from within the Repository Committee and a list of suggestions was compiled. The suggestions were ranked by committee members, and the name that ranked highest is "Open Massachusetts: A Public Higher Education Repository."

A common theme in responses and name suggestions was highlighting the fact that this is a Public Higher Education space, and a continued focus on equity. A new name and new year promise continued growth and energy for the Hub!

## The Student View

*This month, Ms Marquita Yager, a student at Berkshire Community College (BCC), has graciously agreed to be interviewed about her experience with OER and especially about her upcoming work with the BCC Bioscience Images Library (BCC BIL), an OER resource that is filling a major gap in the pool of image resources available to be used in bioscience courses and labs. Partially funded by a \$20,000,000 grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, this ongoing project is overseen by Professor Fayette A. Reynolds ([freynold@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:freynold@berkshirecc.edu)). [The main page for the BCC BIL](#) lists the groups of image resources available, while [the BCC BIL's Flickr account](#) makes these public domain images easily available to the public, with more being added from time to time.*

**TSV:** *Hi Marquita, thank you for offering to be interviewed for my 'The Student View' column in the 'Break It Open' statewide OER Newsletter.*

*Had you ever heard anything about open educational resources (OER) before you started to attend BCC?*

**MY:** *While it's not precisely the definition of an OER, I've enjoyed the productions of Complexly for several years, beginning perhaps a year or two before I started at BCC. Their Crash Course channel (<https://thecrashcourse.com/about/>) on YouTube is full of free educational videos written by educators, and often hosted by employees with relevant degrees. I love everything about it, and the more I learned about it, the more I wanted to be a part of something like that.*

**TSV:** *As you started to attend classes, did you have any opinion about the fact that you had that additional expense, where you had to purchase textbooks and other materials for your classes?*

**MY:** *I always have opinions about expenses, I'm a broke college student! But BCC is a community college, and many of my professors have made a sincere effort to employ freely available resources to keep student costs to a minimum. I can stomach much of the costs, but I live off scholarships, and I have no dependents, and I'm lucky enough to have a job that pays decently well for a single adult; not everyone is in such a situation. Some purchases can't be avoided, but they've been relatively few and far between aside from my lit classes.*

**TSV:** *What was your first reaction upon being told what was meant by OER?*

**MY:** **Full Support.** *I grew up on PBS and Bill Nye tapes in school, and as a "Gifted Kid," I had the opportunity to see the difference in educational resources between my "regular" and "gifted" classes. It took me a few years out of the public school system to make sense of the differences in educational materials I'd seen between AP classes and my "academic level" classes, and it was upsetting. Any OER means that more people have access to materials that can be shown to anyone, found easily, and shared among all those with an interest in the subject, not just students being groomed to compete for*

*valedictorian and crush AP tests. As I got older, it became clear that OER could be useful not just for traditional students, but also for those trying to learn in situations where they have been deprived of a formal and comprehensive learning experience; kids in rough situations, adults who missed out on grade school education, and those looking to expand their education to attain a better quality of life can all benefit from OER.*

**TSV:** *Which class were you taking when you first heard of OER, and have any of your classes used a free OER textbook instead of a traditional expensive textbook?*

**MY:** *Several of my classes have utilized OER texts and free YouTube educational videos to save us the trouble of acquiring expensive texts, and it's made a huge difference in the expected cost of my education. The first time I heard a resource described with any language close to "OER," may well have been the first day of Bio 101 with Faye, Fall 2019, when she was introducing herself and her work at BCC and told us about the image library.*

**TSV:** *Did you ever participate in an open pedagogy assignment that made use of OER? If so, what was the assignment, and what did you think of the experience?*

**MY:** *I can't name a specific task, but I know I've used a number of OER to complete various assignments. Some are better than others, but I still appreciate the efforts. Their existence means people are trying to make education free and accessible.*

**TSV:** *How did you learn about the existence of the BCC BIL?*

**MY:** *See 4.*

**TSV:** *When you became aware of the Library, what was your initial opinion of it?*

**MY:** *I wanted to contribute! I already had a love of microscopy, and Faye was so engaging, and I wanted to learn how to operate the marvelous technology she was using to find and photograph the subjects. The fact that she had specifically created it to fill a need in an educational field was absolutely lovely to me. The images were taken with care, and so much effort has been put into their labeling and descriptions.*

**TSV:** *Did any of the courses you have been taking at BCC make use of images from the BIL, and if so, how?*

**MY:** *To my knowledge, most of the life science lab manuals dealing with microscopic subjects at BCC are created using BIL images, this is essentially only possible because of the library; without the library and the work that went into it, the cost of such clear and detailed images would have prohibited their use in a community college-produced lab manual.*

**TSV:** *What made you want to get a job helping with the BIL?*

**MY:** *I've wanted to contribute since the first day I heard of it, but I couldn't find time Fall of 2019 because I work full time and it was my first semester back in school in a decade. Covid took two years of possibility of working on it. 2022 was a tough year for my mental and physical health.*

*I was diagnosed with breast cancer a little over two weeks ago on January 12, and my doctor told me I was “about to be very busy.” I need to stay in school for structure and fulfillment, but there is no way I’d be able to keep up with the scheduled exams, labs, and learning objectives of the microbiology class I was registered for. The night I got the news, I sent an email to our Honors Program Coordinator proposing I work on the Bioscience Image Library, contributing images and notations, and document the process in a memoir of sorts. There is a lot of emotional processing for a diagnosis like this, and I felt the need for a kind of work that would engulf me completely, allowing my mind to process things in the background, to find sense and reason and beauty in the cells on slides that the cells in my tumors can not offer. The fact that it would allow me to contribute to an OER, to the wealth of free and accessible educational resources I have come to value so highly, to be so grateful for? **Priceless.** Honestly, I’m tearing up a little just thinking about it. I knew Faye needed someone to help with the library, I knew I would need the flexibility this project allows for, and I knew every shred of effort I made would enrich the value of this resource for others.*

**TSV:** *What exactly are you doing/what will you be doing when you begin assisting with the BCC BIL?*

**MY:** *With Faye’s guidance regarding subjects and preparations, I’ll be preparing slides for imaging, photographing them, and labeling them with explicit notations so they can be added to educational materials (and art, as it happens!) directly from the library with detailed, image-specific information.*

**TSV:** *After your experience with OER, what is your general opinion of it?*

**MY:** *Generally speaking, OER are one of my favorite human endeavors of all time. Sure, some resources are better than others in production or functionality, but the point is we’re trying to help more people to learn more. For ages, extensive education has been the domain of those with the monetary resources to secure educational resources, but we can do so much more now, and we can give it all away on the internet to anyone who asks for it.*

**TSV:** *If you could say something about OER and/or open pedagogy (if you’ve had any experience with it), to other professors who themselves are not very familiar with it...what would you say?*

**MY:** *The opportunity to create, improve, and distribute OER materials is now open to virtually every educator in the world; it can sometimes take a bit of sifting to find what you’re looking for to help your students or even yourself, but if you cannot? There is the need. Create them if you can, find others to help if you cannot. Please help to make structured, top tier education as accessible as possible, not just for those enrolled in school, but for everyone.*

**TSV:** *Marquita, thank you so much for your time!*

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## Upcoming Events

### 1. Faculty Zoom Webinar: Copyright and Open Licensing in OER

In this 30-minute webinar presented by Rebecca Dowgiert, Scholarly Communications Librarian at Framingham State University, you’ll learn about the Creative Commons open licenses that are

used to make open educational resources retainable, reusable, redistributable, revisable, and remixable. You will also understand more about what to do if you are remixing multiple open resources, as well as learn about guidelines for how to correctly attribute any open resources you are using. **Feb 15, 2023** 12:30pm - 1:00pm

Registration Required: <https://framingham.libcal.com/event/9706626>

## 2. OEGlobal - Open Education Week

[Open Education Week](#) is an annual celebration of the people and activities that apply open practices to education around the world. [The Call for Contributions](#) is open and will close Feb 28. OE week will be held **March 6-10**.

## 3. NEOER - Northeast OER Summit

[The Northeast Regional OER Summit](#) is a multi-state collaborative event for new and experienced OER advocates offering the opportunity to learn and share effective practices in awareness building, implementation, collaboration, strategy, and research. The virtual summit will be held **April 4-5**.

## Save The Date

### 1. OpenEd23 - Open Education Conference

[The Open Education Conference](#) Board of Directors is excited to announce that #OpenEd23 will be held as a virtual event on **Nov 7-9, 2023**.



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