

Book Review: An Introduction to Open Education

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Volume 23, numéro 4, novembre 2022

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1093326ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v23i4.6494>

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Éditeur(s)

Athabasca University Press (AU Press)

ISSN

1492-3831 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Paskevicius, M. (2022). Compte rendu de [Book Review: An Introduction to Open Education]. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 23(4), 183–185. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v23i4.6494>

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November – 2022

Book Review: An Introduction to Open Education



Editors: Arts, Y., Call, H., Cavan, M., Holmes, T. P., Rogers, J., Tuiloma, S. H., West, L., & Kimmons, R. (2021). *An Introduction to Open Education*. EdTech Books.

https://edtechbooks.org/open_education

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Review date: February 17, 2022

An Introduction to Open Education joins a collection of over 250 open textbooks on edtechbooks.org. The collection there is a significant contribution of open textbooks specifically focused on education, technology-enabled learning, learning design, and research. All of the texts are freely available online with open licenses that enable reuse and remix by educators, students, and self-learners.

The text under review, *An Introduction to Open Education*, features contributions from several authors, many of them well established in the open education research and practice literature. The book has been edited and compiled by eight authors and appears to be a collaborative project created by faculty and graduate students at Brigham Young University. It includes sections on foundations of open education, research into open education, future directions for open education, and obstacles to the use of open educational resources (OER). The book concludes with appendices including an author list, glossary and keyword list, and a useful hyperlinked index with links to key issues discussed in the text.

The book begins with a section outlining the foundations of open education, most specifically focused on OER. A definition of the term is aptly described to have relevance to all individuals, be it learners in formal education settings, educators, or self-directed learners. This usefully widens the context and applicability of OER to all individuals. This section of the book contains excellent material on copyright, including discussions of open licensing, fair use, and the public domain. Overall, this foundation section provides an excellent overview for those new to OER and open licences, and clearly explains why these are important to support increasing access to teaching and learning.

The foundation section includes a useful discussion on file formats and technical considerations for ensuring OER are useable. This material resonated in particular with me as a result of my experiences supporting educators and teacher candidates as they identify and attempt to use and remix OER. File

formats and technical issues can at times cause friction in the use of OER, and I believe this was a useful addition to the book's foundation section. I appreciated this discussion on file formats and the digital literacies needed to navigate and combine different media types to create new OER. The framework guiding this discussion, known as ALMS, suggests that publishers and OER creators consider access to the necessary editing tools, level of editing expertise, meaningfully editable formats, and self-sourced materials. The ALMS framework provides a thoughtful lens for creators to consider when making OER available as well as a way to scrutinize OER in terms of reusability.

The OER research section tackles many of the issues related to OER, including resource selection, quality assurance, continuous improvement, and the efficacy of OER. Many of the chapters appear to be adaptations of peer-reviewed studies previously published in a variety of open access journals and include links to the previous versions as published. The chapter provides a thoughtful collection of the topical research into OER.

The future directions section includes four chapters focused on open pedagogy, again compiled from previously published articles or blog posts. I am not entirely convinced that open pedagogy represents a future direction; from the content of this section, it appears that the authors may share this view. Open pedagogy is very much a current path for OER as many educators and students are taking up the practices associated with open education in exciting ways. There may have been a missed opportunity here to showcase the research and work being done in and around open pedagogy and in doing so, include more diverse voices and perspectives in this section.

Structurally, I believe that the content in the final sections on recognizing and overcoming obstacles as well as assumptions and challenges of open scholarship could have been included in the future directions section. The recognizing and overcoming obstacles section contains only a single chapter. As it stands, the issues around obstacles and barriers to OER use, as well as that of open scholarship, may be considered future directions (and/or current trends) as posited in the previous section.

The book concludes with a section including slide decks and video presentations from a selection of PhD students at Brigham Young University. I would have liked to see this section introduced in more detail, as well as provide information about how the student contributions came to be part of the book. Many of the videos included transcripts both within the video and provided as part of the text. These presentations provide a nice addition to the text, showcasing various student perspectives.

Leveraging the online format of this textbook, it includes several videos, slide decks, links to further resources, lists of common questions, H5P interactives, and chapter feedback surveys. These enhance the book by providing additional resources, interactivity, and feedback mechanisms.

Overall, *An Introduction to Open Education* would benefit from more consistency around citation practices throughout the chapters. While some chapters contained a reference list in APA format, others adopted footnotes, while still others used hypertext links directly in the text. Consistency across the collection of chapters would be a useful improvement to this resource. A reference list by chapter would also be a valuable addition to the book index.

Generally, this book adds to our understanding of open education, most specifically focused on an understanding of OER and the issues related to their use. Particularly, this resource serves as a valuable introductory text for those new to open education; it would serve graduate students and faculty new to these practices and approaches very well.

The growing collection of EdTechBooks is well worth a review for anyone working, teaching, or studying in the area of education, technology-enabled learning, learning design, or research. *An Introduction to Open Education* is a great addition to the collection. I imagine this text, like others in the collection, will evolve as it is taken up, revised, and progresses further, informed by the feedback mechanisms built in through chapter surveys and remixability provided by the open license and friction free access by educators, students, and self-learners.

