

9-3-2017

## Connect OER Annual Report 2016-2017

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# CONNECT OER ANNUAL REPORT

2016-2017

SEPTEMBER 5, 2017

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**SPARC\***

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend a big thank you to the 65 institutional leaders and their colleagues on campus who assisted in the completion of their campus profiles. Thank you also to the SPARC OER Advisory Committee and the numerous librarians who provided feedback throughout the process. Additional thanks to Jan Gondol for developing the Connect OER software, and to Nicole Allen for her continual support throughout the development of this pilot.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve this project, and better serve our members and the larger OER community.

Finally, a special thanks to the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation for their continued support of SPARC's Open Education program.

## SUGGESTED CITATION

Yano, B. (2017). Connect OER Annual Report, 2016-2017. Washington, DC: SPARC. <https://sparcopen.org/our-work/connect-oer/reports>



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Earlier this year, SPARC launched Connect OER—a platform to share and discover information about Open Educational Resources (OER) activities at campuses across North America. Through Connect OER, academic libraries create and manage profiles about their institution's efforts on OER, producing valuable data that we use to populate a searchable directory and produce an annual report.

As the first Connect OER Annual Report, this document summarizes insights from the Connect OER pilot, which ran from May - July 2017. The data encompass 65 SPARC member libraries spanning 31 U.S. states and five Canadian provinces who participated in the pilot. Our analysis provides a snapshot of what is happening on the ground level with OER at this subset of institutions. Our intent is that these insights will help inform SPARC members, the open education community, and the library community at large about current trends, best practices, and the collective impact being achieved through OER at participating institutions.

The purpose of the Connect OER pilot was to identify:

- **Which SPARC member campuses were actively engaging in OER**
- **What role the library—in relation to other campus stakeholders—was playing in these efforts**
- **What institutional resources have been made available to support these efforts**
- **What kinds of activities and partnerships exist on campus**
- **What the overall impact of OER has been at SPARC member campuses**

As the project transitions out of the pilot, we hope that the Connect OER directory will continue to grow, so that future annual reports can provide insights based on a broader range of institutions across North America. We recognize that the directory will never reach a state of completion since activities are always evolving, but our annual snapshots will provide a meaningful illustration of the reach of the OER movement, and the impact it has for students.

## KEY INSIGHTS

- 1** Libraries are the most engaged entity on campus in efforts to advance OER
- 2** Within libraries, the department most actively engaged in advancing OER is Scholarly Communications
- 3** Science is the academic field with the most OER traction
- 4** Nearly half of the participating institutions have a faculty or staff person with explicit OER responsibilities
- 5** OER grant programs are the most common type of campus OER program reported
- 6** SPARC member institutions saved students an estimated \$5 million through the use of OER in the 2016-2017 academic year

# INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the movement for Open Educational Resources (OER) has been accelerating across North American higher education, with numerous institutions launching initiatives to support the creation, adoption, adaptation, and awareness of OER. While many efforts have connected with organized networks, communities, and consortia, many others are happening organically and may lack visibility outside of their institution. Furthermore, most of the metrics available related to the scale and impact of OER tend to be tracked through specific lenses, such as the use of particular materials, membership organizations, or geographic location. SPARC created Connect OER to help build bridges between campuses actively working on OER. This report is an effort to summarize the information collected through Connect OER so far.

## WHAT IS CONNECT OER?

Connect OER is a platform to share and discover information about OER activities at campuses across North America. Starting with a pilot for SPARC member libraries that ran May - July 2017, the platform will soon move out of pilot and become open to all institutions in the U.S. and Canada. Connect OER has three main components:

- **Campus Profiles:** Each participating institution has a campus profile, which includes a summary of OER activities and basic metrics about the status of OER on campus. This profile can be updated and expanded over time as initiatives progress.
- **Searchable Directory:** We have created a directory where users can search for campuses based on their characteristics, types of activities, and key words. This directory is populated with the content submitted from participating institutions.
- **Annual Report:** Each year, SPARC will produce a report using the data collected through Connect OER. The report will provide a snapshot of the state of OER at participating campuses and best practices, which can be used as a baseline for measuring progress in future years.

*Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and repurposing by others. OER include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge.*

# DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected through the Connect OER platform, which consists of a series of forms. All campuses are required to complete an Institutional Profile, which collects a set of basic information about OER at the institution. Institutions can also optionally complete forms with information about various Campus Activities, including Programs, Events, Resources and Policies. Finally, institutions can submit an Annual Impact Report measuring the extent of OER adoption and awareness during each academic year.

This report includes data from our pilot period, which ran May - July 2017. On May 1st, we distributed an invitation with login information to join Connect OER to the directors of all 215 SPARC member libraries.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the next months, we also conducted individual outreach to OER advocates at SPARC member campuses to encourage them to join. Since our launch, 65 of SPARC's member institutions (30%) have joined Connect OER by completing at least an Institutional Profile. These institutions span 31 U.S. states and five Canadian provinces.

All data collected through the Connect OER platform are released under a CC0 1.0 Public Domain Dedication. You can download a copy of the full dataset used for this report from <https://sparcopen.org/our-work/connect-oer/reports/>.

## THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide a snapshot of OER activities at the 65 SPARC member institutions who have joined Connect OER. We should note that this only encompasses a specific subset of institutions that self-selected both by being SPARC members and by choosing to join Connect OER, and therefore the insights cannot be extrapolated to a larger population. However, we believe that the insights will help inform SPARC members, the OER community, and the library community at large about current trends, best practices, and the collective impact being achieved.

Our hope is for the Connect OER directory to continue to grow, so that future annual reports can provide insights based on a broader range of institutions across North America. We recognize that the directory will never reach a state of completion since activities are always evolving, but our hope is that our annual snapshots will provide a meaningful illustration of the reach of the OER movement, and the impact it has for students.

*“While the campus has long been investigating the issue of course content affordability and has made progress, much work still needs to be done,” explains Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education Cathy Koshland. “We must further reduce course content costs and utilize accessible digital library resources to provide an equitable and engaging learning environment for our students.”*

**— UC Berkeley Institutional Profile**

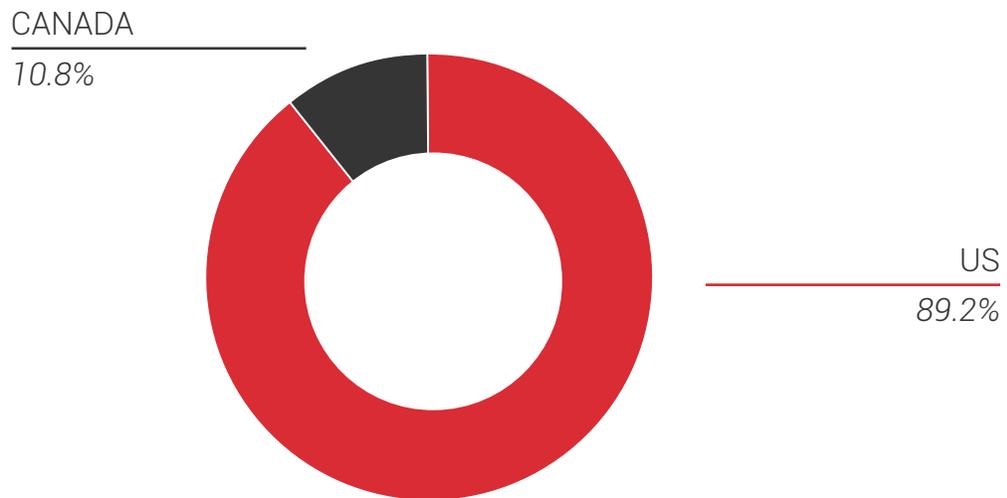
<sup>1</sup> A full list of current SPARC members can be found here: <https://sparcopen.org/who-we-are/members/>

# INSTITUTIONS REPRESENTED

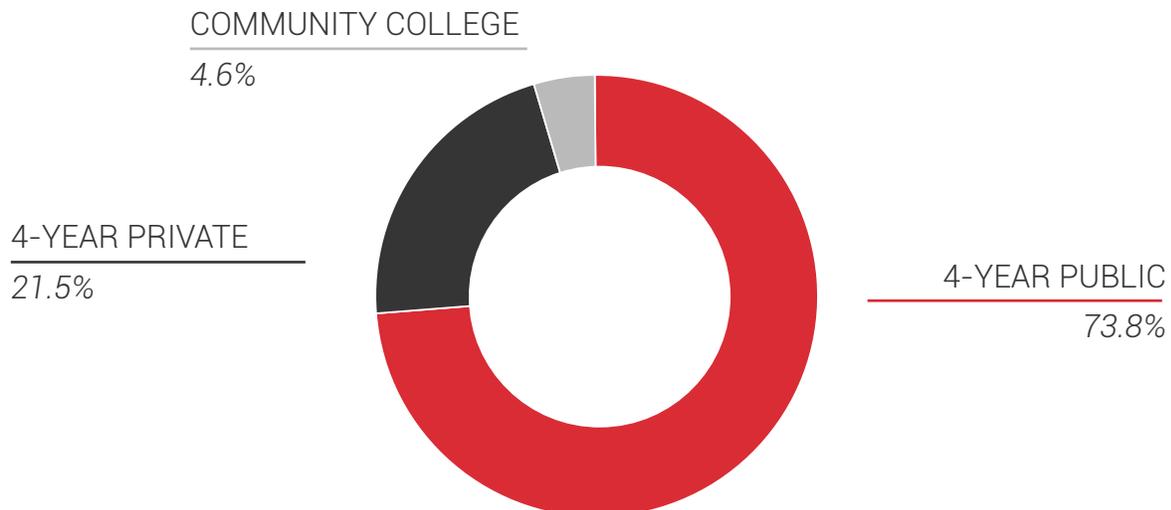
To better understand the data being reported on, here is a breakdown of the 65 institutions represented:

- 58 institutions are based in the US, while seven institutions are based in Canada (Fig. 1).
- 48 institutions are considered 4-year public, 14 institutions are 4-year private, and three are community colleges (Fig. 2).
- 45 institutions have an enrolment that exceeds 20,000, ten institutions fall within the 10,000 - 19,999 range, three institutions fall within the 5,000 - 9,999 range, and seven institutions fall within the 1,000 - 4,999 range (Fig. 3).

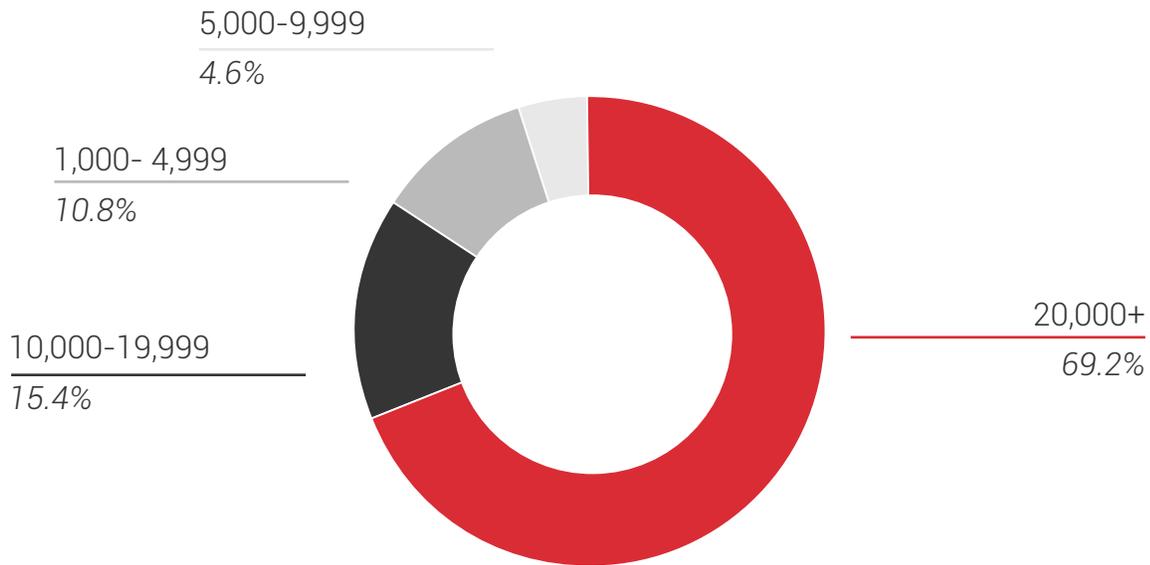
**Figure 1. Participating institutions broken down by country.**



**Figure 2. Participating institutions broken down by institution type.**



**Figure 3. Participating institutions broken down by enrollment.**



## SPARC MEMBERSHIP

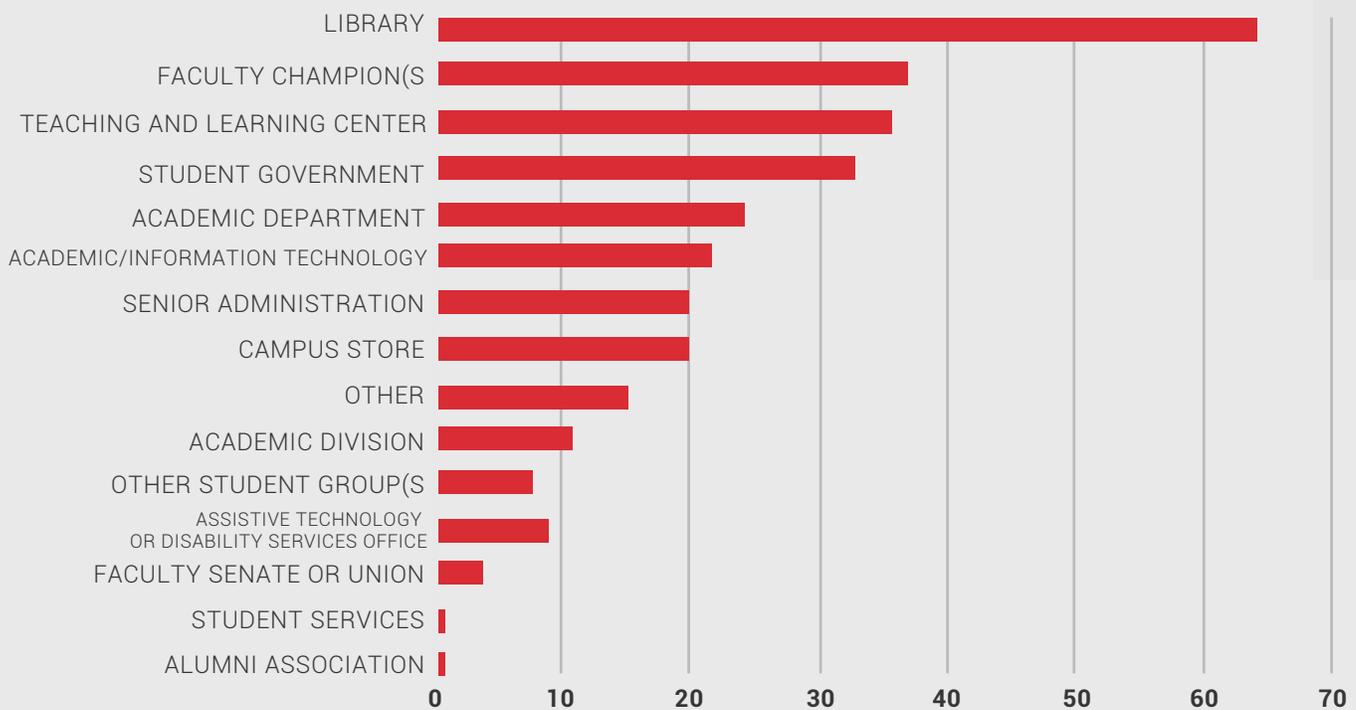
SPARC members are our organization's heart and soul, setting the agenda and driving our vibrant programs forward. Participation in SPARC is a proven, effective way for members to leverage library resources to the fullest to achieve their missions as academic and research libraries. Membership is open to North American and international academic and research institutions that share an interest in creating a more open and diverse environment for scholarly communication. Members receive assistance in building their campuses Open programming through engagement opportunities, expert insight, and access to an array of SPARC resources. Annual membership runs for a calendar year and is available in different categories.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>For more information on SPARC membership, visit: <https://sparcopen.org/become-a-member/#options>

# KEY INSIGHT #1: LIBRARIES ARE THE MOST ENGAGED ENTITY ON CAMPUS IN EFFORTS TO ADVANCE OER

All but one of the 65 institutions who submitted data noted the Library as being actively engaged in efforts to advance OER on campus. Three other groups on campus were listed by a majority of institutions as engaged: Faculty Champions (58%), Teaching and Learning Centers (56%), and Student Groups (52%). Academic Departments (38%) and Senior Administrators (31%) were listed as engaged at roughly one third of institutions. Figure 4 depicts entities actively engaged in efforts to advance OER on campus.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 4. Entities actively engaged in efforts to advance OER on campus.



We also asked institutions to rate the level of awareness of OER among four campus stakeholder groups: Administration, Library, Faculty and Students. Amongst the 22 institutions that answered this question, the Library ranked the highest with an average rating of 7.9 out of a possible 10. Administration received a 5 while Faculty were given a 4.4. The lowest perceived awareness were Students who received an average rating of 3.6.

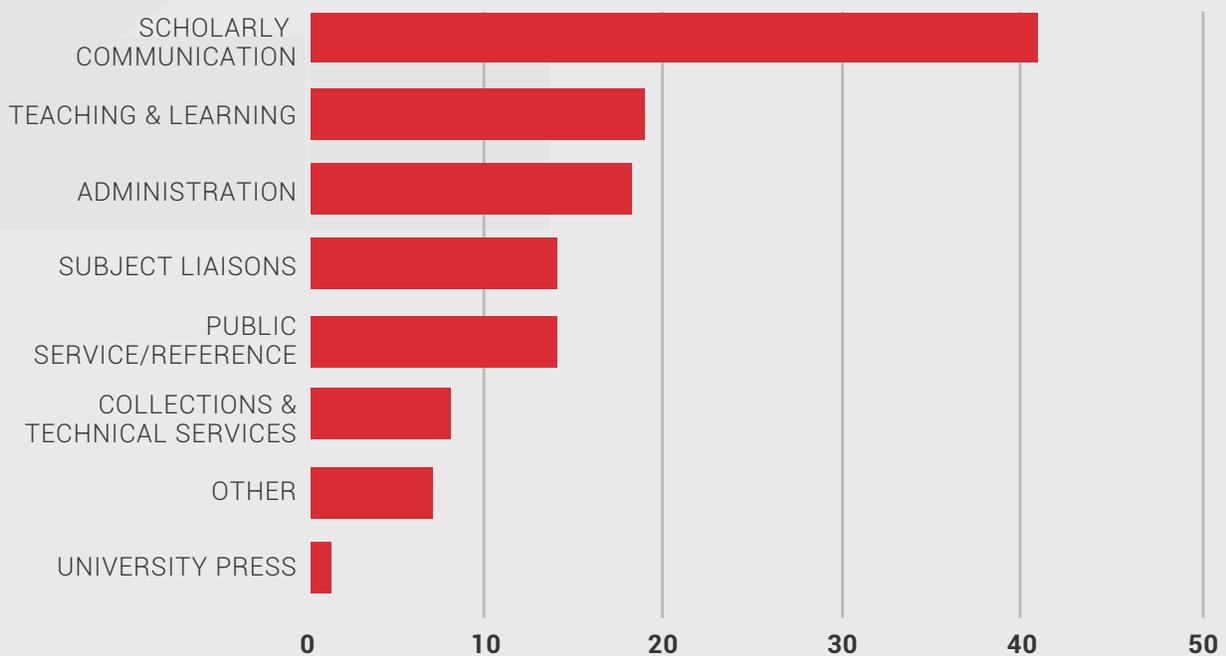
We should note that library leadership on OER is likely overrepresented among the institutions who joined Connect OER, because all of the participating institutions are SPARC members. Once Connect OER is opened up outside SPARC's membership, this is likely to shift to include institutions with less engaged libraries.

<sup>3</sup>The responses received for None of the Above, Communications Office, and E-Learning/Distance Education were not significant and were therefore intentionally left off the chart.

## KEY INSIGHT #2: WITHIN LIBRARIES, THE DEPARTMENT MOST COMMONLY ENGAGED IN ADVANCING OER IS SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS

Of the institutions who indicated that the library was actively engaged in OER, Scholarly Communications was indicated by nearly two-thirds (63%) of institutions as the most commonly engaged department. Teaching and Learning (29%) and Library Administration (28%) were identified as the next most commonly engaged. Figure 5 depicts library departments engaged in advancing OER.

Figure 5. Library departments engaged in advancing OER.



Note: Institutions were instructed to select the best option, and if there were multiple departments to select up to three. The responses received for Not Applicable and Unknown were not significant and were therefore intentionally left off the chart.

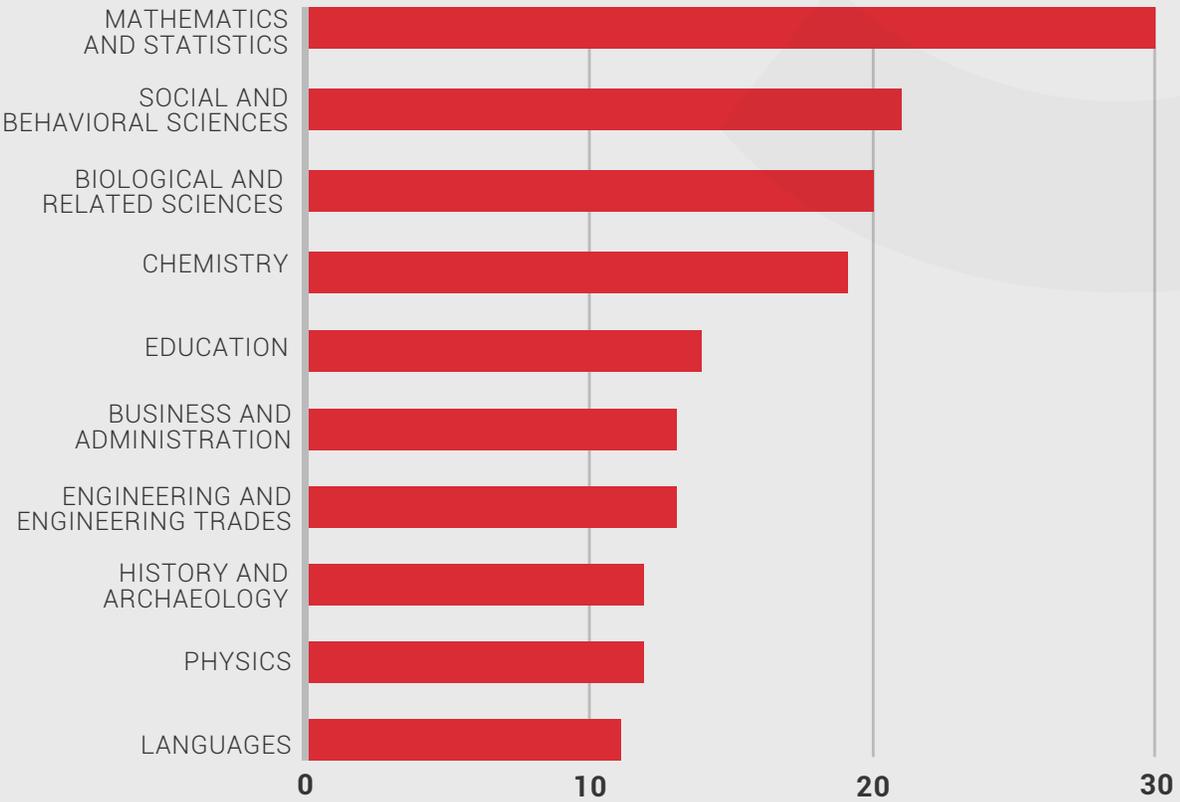
“On the surface, OER saves students money on textbooks. On a deeper level, open education increases student achievement, inspires passion among faculty, and builds better connections between students and the materials they use to meet their educational goals. For all of these reasons the library and its partners support and will continue to support the use of OER at USU.  
– Utah State University Institutional Profile



# KEY INSIGHT #3: MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS IS THE ACADEMIC SUBJECT WITH THE MOST OER TRACTION

Institutions were asked to note which academic subjects had the greatest OER traction. Amongst the 65 institutions that answered this question, mathematics and statistics ranked the highest with nearly half (30) indicating it had traction, followed by social and behavioural sciences (22), biological and related sciences (21), and chemistry (20). Figure 6 depicts the top 10 academic subjects with the most OER traction.

**Figure 6. Top 10 academic subjects with the most OER traction.**



Looking at broad categories of academic disciplines, the greatest number of campuses listed Sciences (32%) as having OER traction, followed by Social Sciences (22%), and Humanities and Arts (17%).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Classification of academic disciplines is according to the UNESCO ISCED-2013 Fields of Education and Training available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002350/235049e.pdf>

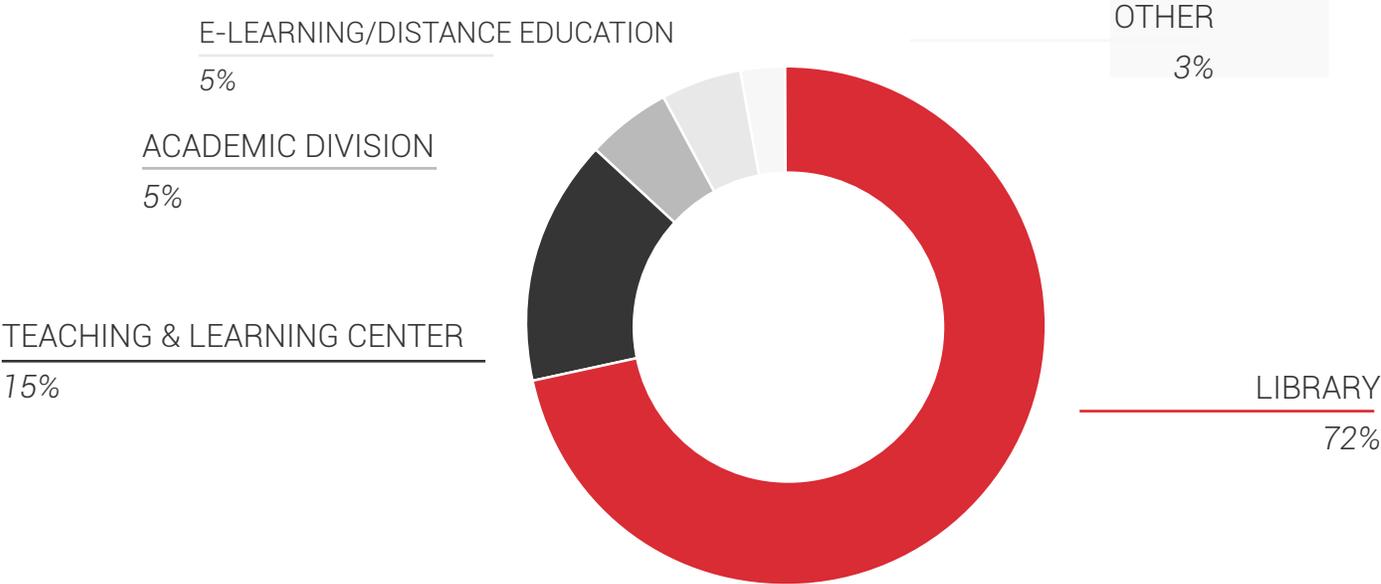


# KEY INSIGHT #4: NEARLY HALF OF THE PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS HAVE A FACULTY OR STAFF PERSON WITH EXPLICIT OER RESPONSIBILITIES

Nearly half of the institutions (48%) indicated that they have a faculty or staff person with OER in their job title (39%) or description (9%). The remaining institutions indicated they did not have a faculty or staff person with explicit OER responsibilities.

Of the 30 institutions with a faculty or staff person with explicit OER responsibilities, the majority (72%) indicated that the positions were located within the library. The next most common location was the Teaching and Learning Center (15%). Seven of the institutions reported having multiple staff across different departments. Figure 7 depicts the location of OER staff persons on campus.

**Figure 7. Location of OER staff persons on campus.**



“The Libraries believe that open education reduces barriers, empowers learners, and connects the academy to the world that it serves.”  
– Michelle Reed

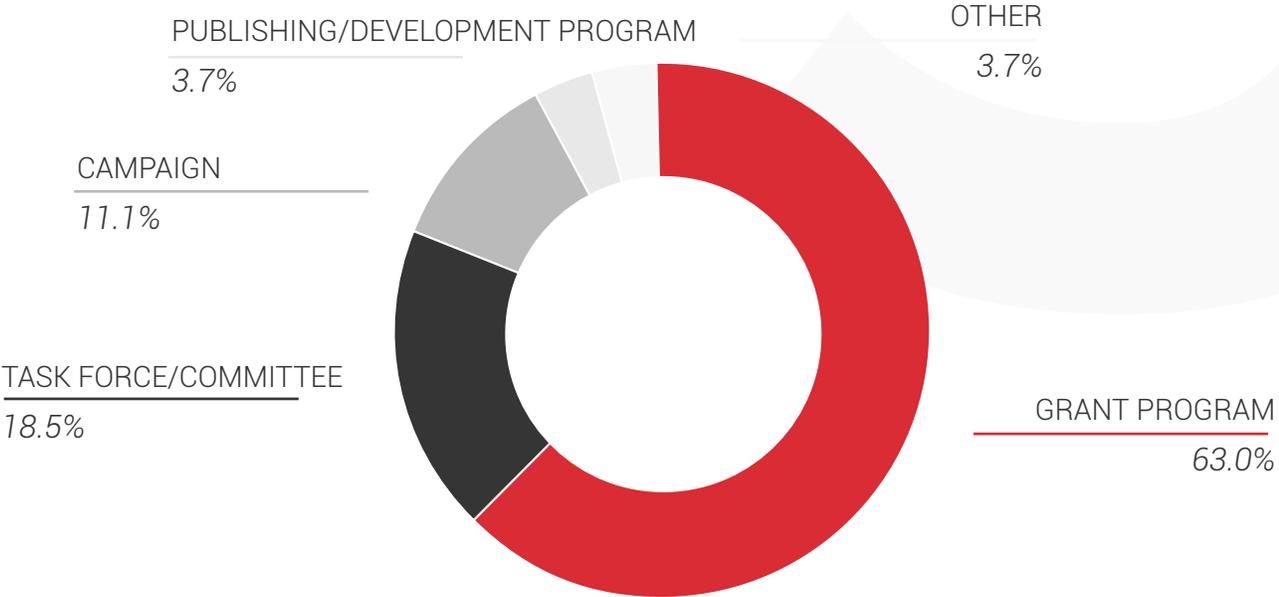
*Institutions like the University of Texas at Arlington have demonstrated their commitment to OER through hiring a full-time Open Education Librarian. Since beginning her role in fall 2016, Michelle has already been instrumental in organizing a Textbook Hero campaign, and has launched a new OER grant program aimed at supporting open pedagogy through the adoption or creation of open educational resources. Michelle is an OpenCon alumni and has presented on her OER work both domestically and internationally.*



# KEY INSIGHT #5: OER GRANT PROGRAMS ARE THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF CAMPUS OER PROGRAM REPORTED

Of the 27 programs reported, nearly two-thirds were in the form of Grant Programs (17).<sup>5</sup> The grant associated with these 17 programs are awarded on a competitive basis to faculty members interested in replacing a traditional course material with OER. Figure 8 depicts the type of OER program reported.

**Figure 8. Type of OER program reported.**



Based on the data collected, the average grant amount is \$2,711.54 and institutions on average have distributed 20 grants each. Six of the 17 institutions who submitted information on OER grant programs were started in 2017. Figure 9 depicts OER grant programs broken down by year started.

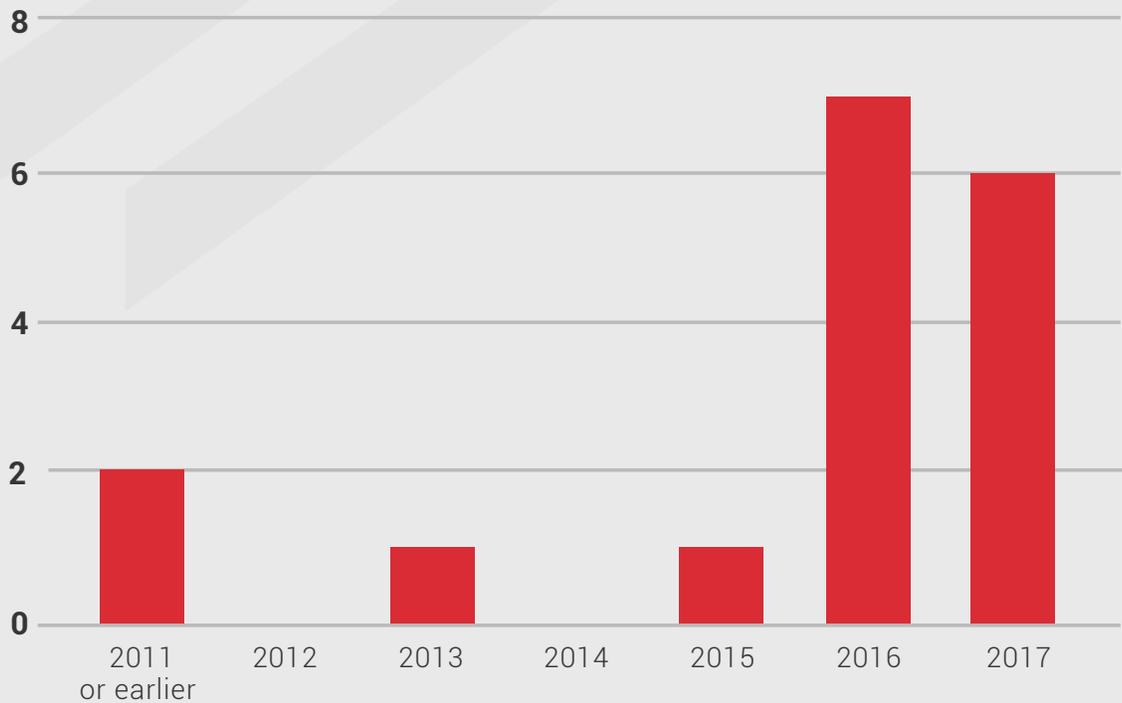
Since implementing their OER Grants program in 2016, Simon Fraser University (Burnaby, BC, Canada) has put forward \$69,000 in grant funding to support 15 grant proposals from faculty members who wish to integrate open educational resources into their courses. Their investment has resulted in student savings totalling \$375,000.

The grants were established with funding from the Office of the Vice-President, Academic, and Provost and are administered jointly by the SFU Library and the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC). Faculty members may receive up to \$5,000 to help them redesign a course to use OER as their primary course material, and to help them adopt and/or adapt open textbooks and other OER for that purpose.



<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this report, we have merged the program categories for Pilot Program and Award under Grant Program, since all of the programs submitted under these two categories are also Grant Programs.

**Figure 9. OER grant programs broken down by year started.**



*Note: The 2011 column represents grants programs started in 2011 or earlier. We should also note that a number of additional institutions indicated that they had OER grant programs in their institutional profile abstract, but did not provide granular information on them, and therefore are not represented in these statistics.*

**“** *The university's future digital learning infrastructure will encompass significantly enhanced capabilities to identify and share digital content (including OER) for the purposes of teaching and learning. OER have significant potential to help campus further embody and enact the Wisconsin Idea through the sharing of our teaching resources across the state, the nation and the world.”*

**– UW Madison Institutional Profile**

## **KEY INSIGHT #6: SPARC MEMBER INSTITUTIONS SAVED STUDENTS AN ESTIMATED \$5 MILLION THROUGH THE USE OF OER IN THE 2016-2017 ACADEMIC YEAR**



**ESTIMATED**

**\$5 MILLION**  
**IN SAVINGS**

In total, 24 SPARC member institutions submitted Annual Impact Reports for the 2016-2017 year, revealing an estimated savings totalling \$5,079,900.<sup>6</sup> Of these students, 34,366 were from the US and 16,433 were from Canada.

In total, 50,799 students were enrolled in courses that used OER as their primary course material, and 251 faculty were reported as having adopted OER as their primary course materials across 246 courses.

Of the institutions that provided information on how many students were using OER, on average each saved students \$267,363.



The University of Oklahoma reported the largest number of courses using OER. Overall, 33 courses used OER in place of traditional textbooks, impacting more than 4,000 students.

<sup>6</sup> This figure was calculated assuming US \$100 savings per student.  
For more details see <http://openoregon.org/is-the-average-cost-of-a-textbook-100/>.

## OTHER INTERESTING FACTS

- Of the 65 institutions that answered the question “Does your institution offer a degree pathway that uses OER in every course?”, six indicated that they are currently offering (2) or are planning to offer (4) an OER degree in the near future. Two were community colleges.
- Of the 65 institutions that answered the question “Does your institution mark the Course Catalog students use for registration to indicate courses using any of the following?”, six indicated that they currently list whether a course uses “OER (open content)” (1), “Cost-free course content, including OER” (1), or “Affordable course content, including cost-free course content and OER” (4).
- Out of a total of 65 institutions, nearly a third (21) indicated that they had a taskforce with OER as the primary focus, while eight indicated they had a taskforce with OER as the secondary focus. Institutions with an OER taskforce on average reported higher savings from OER adoption.
- Amongst the 27 programs submitted, OER Adoption (37%) was the most widely cited primary strategy, followed by OER Awareness (26%).
- Of the 17 grant programs submitted, ten require recipients to openly license and freely share the resources adopted and or created, while seven only encouraged recipients to openly license and freely share the resources adopted and or created.
- Of the 32 submitted events, over half were in the form of Talks/Presentations (53%). Events on average had 34 people in attendance, and nearly three-quarters (71%) of the events had an exclusive OER focus (as opposed to focusing more broadly on other affordable options).
- Of the 24 institutions that completed Annual Impact Reports, a handful (5) reported zero figures for students, faculty and courses using OER. This is an important takeaway highlighting that tracking OER use can be challenging.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This report does not reflect all of the OER work being done at SPARC member institutions, however, it does provide valuable insight into some of the trends and themes across institutions active on OER. Through Connect OER we have found that SPARC members are engaging in a number of different approaches to advance OER. Whether this be through annual campaigns and events during back to school season or Open Education Week, or through exciting pilot projects such as OER grant programs or the launch of a campus or systemwide OER taskforce, the commitment of SPARC members in advancing OER is resounding. And to top it off, libraries are indeed leading the way on OER!

As this is our first annual report, we look forward to observing how SPARC members and North American higher education institutions as a whole continue to engage with OER. Understanding what role the library is playing in these efforts and what the impact of the collective effort has been makes our movement more cohesive and strong. However, we recognize that the data represented in this report does not tell the whole story; SPARC members are even more engaged than this report depicts, and we hope to be able to tell an even fuller story next year.

For any questions or concerns regarding the content of this report, please contact [brady@sparcopen.org](mailto:brady@sparcopen.org)

## ABOUT SPARC

SPARC is a global coalition committed to making Open the default for research and education. SPARC empowers people to solve big problems and make new discoveries through the adoption of policies and practices that advance Open Access, Open Data, and Open Education.

[www.sparcopen.org](http://www.sparcopen.org)

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