CHAMPIONING OER TRANSFORMATION ON CAMPUS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

Leading the way forward

'When students can **access the resources they need without having to choose between textbooks and basic necessities**, we create an environment where academic success is determined by effort and ability, rather than economic circumstances.'

Trevor Dawes, Vice Provost for Libraries and Museums and May Morris University Librarian, University of Delaware

UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
LIBRARY, MUSEUMS & PRESS

SYLLA.

BACKGROUND

The University of Delaware (UD) is a public R1 land-grant research university located in Newark, Delaware. Serving a diverse student population of over 24,000, UD has long demonstrated its commitment to academic excellence and public service. As part of its strategic priorities described in their 'Forward and Forever' strategic plan, UD is committed to expanding student access & success, inclusive excellence, and innovation through initiatives that strengthen access, affordability, and the academic experience.
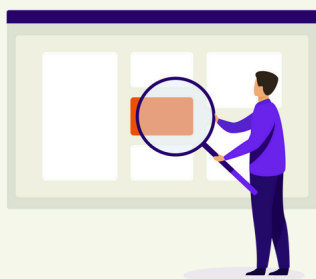
In the U.S., the Open Educational Resources (OER) movement is well-established, with thousands of institutions & individual advocates participating in collaborative networks like the Open Education Network (OEN). At UD, OER efforts have already taken root thanks to the leadership of The Library, Museums and Press in partnership with faculty champions across campus. However, scaling these efforts sustainably across a large and complex institution remains a challenge for UD, and many other institutions across the United States.

Recognising the need to take a more strategic and data-driven approach, UD partnered with Sylla to pilot new tools that could help the university expand its use of OER, improve affordability around course materials for students, and empower their staff to continue to lead this change.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The University of Delaware offers 150+ majors and minors, and 250+ graduate and post-baccalaureate programs. These programmes can increasingly benefit from the global pool of open educational resources (OER) available online.

With the emergence of powerful new technologies, we set out to explore how these innovations could be leveraged to better connect OER across the institution. Our goal was to investigate how smarter use of data, tools, and techniques could enhance cross-campus collaboration and improve student affordability.

Guided by this vision, the University of Delaware Library, Museums and Press and Sylla partnered to evaluate how the latest tools and approaches could support their mission to improve student access, affordability, and academic success.

APPROACH

Together, the University of Delaware Library, Museums and Press and Sylla took a multi-pronged approach, combining technology with strategic intent. As part of this effort, we sought to:

1. Develop a clearer understanding of commercial textbook usage across campus
2. Identify where OER can replace or supplement existing materials
3. Investigate which tools & workflows the needed to continue to champion OER on campus
4. Understand the potential for cross-campus collaboration and at scale implementation of OER

To bring this vision to life, we focused on building a strong foundation of data, smart automation, and campus-wide alignment. What followed was a multi-step approach that empowered their team and enabled meaningful, scalable collaboration around OER.

- **Assigned Reading Analysis**: By looking at bookstore data, we generated a comprehensive map of commercial textbooks used across campus. This baseline helped identify opportunities for affordable alternatives.

- **OER Alignment at Scale**: Sylla's AI-driven recommendation engine cross-referenced existing resources with high-quality OER alternatives. From there, we were able to present OER recommendations for the full set as well as for entire textbooks or individual chapters.

- **Strategic overview**: This effort helped put their team back in the driver's seat—equipped with better data, strategic insights and fitting workflows, providing a 360 overview of OER potential across campus.

- **Facilitating Collaboration**: With this overview in place, paired with scaleable workflows, their team were able to strategically engage with faculty, instructional designers and other stakeholders around OER opportunities. Ultimately coming together around a shared commitment to improve affordability and supporting students around their academic needs.

"In partnership with the University of Delaware Library, Museums and Press team we looked closely at the data, tools and approaches in place today. We identified areas where we could seamlessly integrate Sylla and enhance their existing workflows, resulting in greater efficiencies. By providing them with a 360 overview of OER uptake we were able to identify new strategic opportunities for their team to continue to increase OER uptake and make a difference for faculty and students everyday."

Sam Eerdmans, Director of Business & Operations, Sylla

EARLY OUTCOMES

Even in its early stages, the pilot revealed significant potential to expand OER use across the institution. By surfacing actionable insights and placing them in the hands of the proactive Library, Museums and Press team, the University of Delaware is laying the groundwork for a more scalable and sustainable OER future.
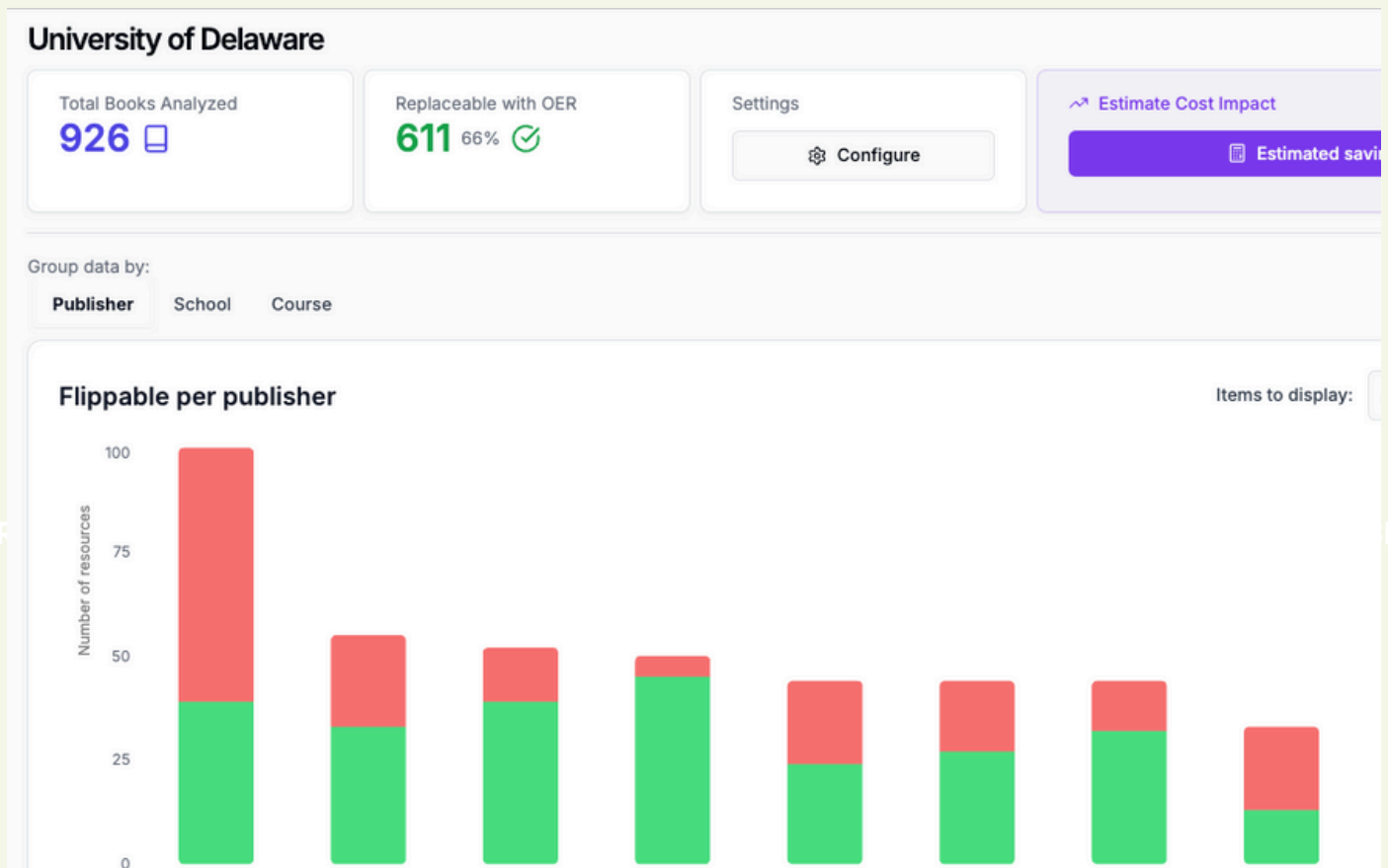
Faculty and staff responded positively to the idea of leveraging existing bookstore data to make smarter decisions about course materials and OER options. Built on a solid foundation the team are now able to take a leading role in future OER initiatives, guided by real-world data and supported by tools that simplify discovery and adoption.

ENABLING LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Building on the success of the pilot, the University of Delaware Library, Museums and Press and Sylla are now taking next steps. The ambition is clear: to lead a strategic OER transformation, improve student access and affordability, and align open education with the university's broader mission.

This joint effort illustrates that with the right data, tools, and partners, institutions can take meaningful strides toward a more affordable and equitable learning environment.

*'"We're excited to partner with Sylla on this innovative initiative because it directly addresses one of the most pressing challenges our students face today - the rising cost of educational materials,"When students can **access the resources they need without having to choose between textbooks and basic necessities**, we create an environment where academic success is determined by effort and ability, rather than economic circumstances.'*

Trevor Dawes, Vice Provost for Libraries and Museums and May Morris University Librarian, University of Delaware

1,000
Analysed nearly 1,000 adopted commercial resources

$
Identified further OER & cost-savings potential

Go!
New techniques and tools supporting strategy

LEADING THE WAY:

Following this initial success, we are pleased to expand our partnership with the University of Delaware:

Further supporting The Library, Museums and Press as it champions student affordability, accessibility and success.

LEARN MORE

Would you like to learn more about how Sylla can support open and affordable learning at your institution? Get in touch to book a demo.

Book a demo

Find out more about Sylla here:
https://www.sylla.io