



# ENHANCING OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE (OER) IDENTIFICATION AT DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

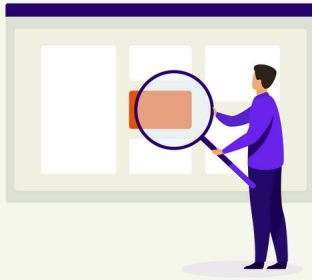
Enabling open practice with Sylla



# BACKGROUND

Deakin University is an Australian public university with a student population of approximately 60,000. In line with its strategic direction, described in [‘Deakin 2030: ideas to impact’](#) the university has undertaken various initiatives to advance open educational practices. A strategic approach is essential to achieving the university’s goals for open education, as highlighted in Deakin’s guiding education and employability plans and the [Deakin Library Plan 2022-2025](#).

Open educational practice is a critical tool for achieving social justice in education, reducing barriers to success for students through both the financial and pedagogical opportunities it presents.



Deakin University offers ~150 Bachelor degree programs, consisting of 1,500+ units. These programs and units can increasingly benefit from the global pool of open educational resources (OER) available online.

However, the current time-consuming manual process of identifying OER can act as a barrier for librarians and academics engaged in this work, and for academics, course directors and unit chairs looking for timely interventions into course and unit development.



## BETTER TOOLS, BRIGHTER FUTURE?

To realise its ambitions, Deakin recognised that scaling up and streamlining the integration of OER into the curriculum was necessary. New tools, techniques and workflows were needed to empower library staff and educators, making it easier for them to navigate the growing corpus of OER and streamline the use of open content in various shapes and sizes, tailored to their needs.

With this vision in mind, Deakin and Sylla set out to test the latest tools and techniques and experiment with these to see if they can indeed help achieve an open future.

# APPROACH

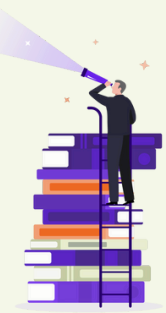
Deakin Library worked with Sylla to learn what support it can offer in realising OER identifications and adoptions amongst faculty. The Sylla technology identified relevant OER and matched them to its technology based on its syllabus, learning objectives, weekly teaching activities and the commercial resource in use today. Deakin Library assessed the impact on manual processes, including speed and quality.

The pilot focused on 5 units selected by Deakin, and aimed to assess:

- comparative time spent identifying and reviewing OER in against traditional search and review approaches
- Sylla's capabilities to identify suitable OER, as assessed by Deakin librarians
- Sylla's potential for integration into the wider Deakin open ecosystem

It also reviewed an additional unit for reading list analysis opportunities, with the aim to understand how reading lists analysis might support cost-savings analysis and OER identification at scale.

Given that library staff and faculty members' time is scarcely available, we set out to create a seamless and time-effective approach.



- **Reading List analysis:** Deakin University shared a subset of its reading list. Where Sylla analysed this information and returned a larger scale overview for which of their resources in use today, OER alternatives exist.
- **Working with the Library team:** We collaborate closely with the library team, making it easier for them to locate, assess and save relevant OER based on the commercial resource and/or syllabus in use today.
- **Commercial Resource & Syllabus-based recommendations:** Deakin provided syllabi for 5 of its units for which the library team and Sylla looked for relevant OER, ensuring a close alignment with the curriculum and learning outcomes.
- **Assess & adopt:** The library team, now equipped with the right tools and information, can in a very targeted way engage with faculty and course leads. Providing them with a high quality service, where they are invited to assess and adopt suitable options together.



*"Together with Deakin's experienced team, we identified key opportunities to enhance their existing workflows, making them more efficient while seamlessly integrating Sylla. This collaboration further strengthens Deakin's approach to OER adoption, supporting their 'Ideas to Impact vision for 2030'. We're excited to join forces in a development partnership to further streamline and scale the use of OER across the institution"*

**Sam Eerdmans, Director of Business & Operations, Sylla**

# EVALUATION & FEEDBACK

**Comparing Sylla to today's process:** To accurately measure any potential time savings, the process of how OERs are found and assessed today at Deakin was broken down in several steps. These steps were then performed, tracked and directly compared to the same steps and time it took to perform these via Sylla.

**Post process analysing how Sylla fits into the larger Deakin ecosystem at scale:**

Once these steps were completed and Sylla's approach was tested. Deakin could evaluate how this would fit into their wider workflow and vision. More specifically, their: (1) day to day library workflow for open, and whether it could help save scarce staff time. (2) The benefit of the reading list analysis and understanding cost-savings potential at scale (3) How Sylla could support curriculum (re)design for faculty, realising additional time-savings.

## LIBRARY TEAM FEEDBACK

### Benefits



*"Really enjoyed the automation! It was great being able to stay in one place and have Sylla do the searching for me. The UI is really clean and nice to look at. Enjoyed it being central and being able to come back to your unit and keep looking at resources."*

*"I liked that with each resource you were able to see at a glance all the relevant details (publisher, date, CC licence etc) and could then open up the book easily to take a more detailed look at its actual content. This made the evaluation process pretty efficient."*

*"I really liked the AI generated topic feature which produced 8 different topics and these were pretty accurate I thought, based on the course description."*

*"The AI generated summary of the content in Sylla was super helpful. I love this feature."*

### Future improvements

*"It's definitely quicker and cleaner than doing the manual process, but I did have a feeling that some things were being missed – I guess what I'm saying is, it's hard to tell how comprehensive the search is"*

*"It would be good to be able to weed our irrelevant results from the list so they don't keep showing up"*



*"The library team found the product easy to use, returning useful OER recommendations for the majority of searches, saving a substantial amount of time when compared to manually searching for OER. Sylla were responsive to insights from the library team during the pilot and I'm looking forward to exploring the wider use of the product."*

**Angie Williamson, Open Education Librarian, Deakin University**



# OUTCOME

## Key Objectives

- Analyse the potential for cost-savings by comparing the costs of existing reading list resources with OER alternatives
- Identify and evaluate suitable OER options for 5 units taught at Deakin University
- Track potential time savings achieved by using Sylla for finding and assessing OER compared to current methods
- Understand how Sylla can be integrated into the wider Deakin open ecosystem

## Results



Successfully analysed and identified larger cost-savings potential



Suitable OER identified for 4/5 Units



Using Sylla resulted in a 54% time saving for finding and assessing OER



There is potential for integrating Sylla into the wider Deakin ecosystem



4/5

Suitable OER for 4 out of 5 units



54%

library staff time saving



\$

Identified larger cost-savings potential



Go!

All participants satisfied and happy to scale up



*"Following a successful pilot, I look forward to collaborating further with Sylla. I'm excited to explore the opportunity to operationalise Sylla to automate OER identification, and to inform development that I believe will help accelerate our move towards open educational practices and resources. I'm also particularly excited by the potential to identify OER opportunities at scale through reading list analysis."*

**Danielle Johnson, Director, Library Services, Deakin University**

## ONTO A BRIGHTER FUTURE WITH OER

Following this initial success, we are pleased to expand our partnership with Deakin University:  
**further supporting Deakin to advance open educational practice at their University.**

# 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](#)



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<https://www.sylla.io>