TOWARDS A FUTURE OF OPEN AND AFFORDABLE LEARNING:

Enabling the adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) with Sylla

Coventry University

SYLLA.

BACKGROUND

Coventry University is a public research university in England with a student population of approximately 30,000 students. Coventry University is a forward-looking, modern university with a proud tradition as a provider of high quality education and a focus on applied research.
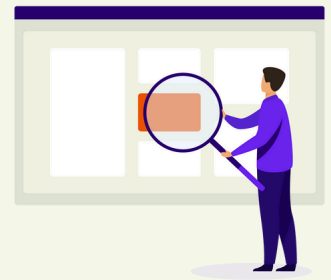
SETTINGS STUDENTS UP FOR SUCCESS

Coventry University centrally supports their undergraduate students by providing all course essentials from day one at no additional cost to the student. Thanks to this scheme, students have benefited from day one access to high quality digital materials, resulting in increases in academic performance as well as student outcomes.
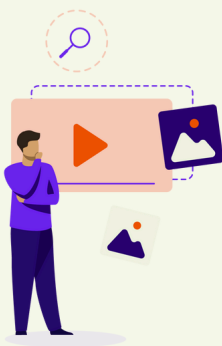
PREVIOUS SUCCESSES

While a central payment model has its benefits, costs for educational resources can differ from provider to provider, and year to year. In an effort to better align expenditure on educational resources with perceived value, Coventry made a remarkable transition in the 2022/2023 fiscal year. During a one-year period, they managed to **transition approximately 50% of their courses** to more affordable learning alternatives. This result was achieved thanks to a top down and coordinated approach led by University leadership, and supported by library, staff and key decision-makers. This campaign resulted in **annual savings of approximately 25% per student per text** — while ensuring students continued to receive access to high quality learning resources at no additional costs. Beyond financial success, the campaign demonstrated that with the right approach faculty members can be mobilised and a University-wide adoption strategy can work.

A NEW CHALLENGE

This effort, while successful, involved significant manual work and staff time. From this background we set out our work to repeat such success — yet, **now including OER and a sustainable practice that could remain in place over time.**

By incorporating OER, the potential for cost savings increases significantly, while ensuring that students continue to receive access to high quality learning resources at no additional costs. Besides cost-savings, this shift involves a broader and shared vision: to move towards a future where commoditization is avoided and more flexibility is created around course-creation/curriculum design. Where content in various shapes and sizes may serve the needs of the educator. This, coupled with the pedagogical benefits of open and adaptable materials, made for an attractive challenge Coventry University and Sylla jointly took on.
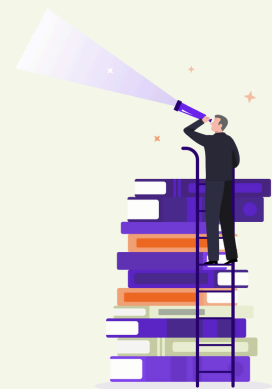
KEY OBJECTIVES

- Provide recommendations for 16 high-enrollment modules in the undergraduate domain of the School of Business and Law.

- Realise OER adoptions for some of these 16 modules resulting in direct cost-savings

- Test a technology solution that can support the adoption process for open and affordable resources.

- Scope the requirements for a scaled-up solution to roll out University-wide.

APPROACH

Given that library staff and faculty members' time is scarcely available, we set out to create a seamless and time-effective approach. This streamlined approach leverages cutting-edge technologies to create a quick and personalised discovery experience for faculty members, tailored to their specific syllabi and learning objectives:

- **1 for 1:** While there is potential for the mixing and combining of OER, there was a desire to keep things as simple and frictionless to start with. Where we would aim to 'swap' one particular paid-for-resource for one open textbook.

- **Syllabus-based recommendations:** Sylla analyses today's syllabi to suggest relevant OER, ensuring a close alignment with the curriculum and learning outcomes.

- **Limited, high-quality results:** Rather than overwhelming users with extensive lists, the system presents a curated selection of the most relevant resources from a controlled set of trusted OER databases - displaying 5 recommendations initially.

- **Contextual elaboration:** For each recommended resource, the system provides detailed explanations of its relevance to the syllabus and potential contributions to learning outcomes and specific topics - from a full resource to an individual chapter, or even page level.

- **Gap analysis:** Sylla identifies potential areas where OER may not fully cover module requirements, allowing faculty members to make informed decisions about supplementary resources.

- **User-friendly interface:** Sylla is designed to be intuitive and easy to use, minimising the time and effort required from faculty members.

RESULTS

16

Faculty participated

£ 95,000

Gross savings compared to last year's spent on commercial eBooks for these 10 modules.

1,000+

Students now benefiting from these OER-enabled courses

10

Faculty members committed to using OER as their core resource

£ 61,000

Net savings of 61,000 GBP after deducting remaining and related expenditures*
net savings of 64%

When deducting all remaining and related costs ensuring a high quality student experience such as the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Sylla, etc. - net savings amounted to 61,000 GBP (64%)

LIBRARY FEEDBACK

"Sylla has supported our transition to Open Educational Resources (OERs), aligning perfectly with our strategic vision to adopt more affordable and accessible learning materials. By automating the process of matching OERs to our module learning outcomes, Sylla saved library staff significant time that would be spent on manual searches and resource curation. This tool has streamlined our workflows and played a crucial role in reducing textbook costs, further advancing our mission of providing equitable access to high-quality learning resources."

**Dal Badesha
Head of Learning Resources and
Student Experience**

TOWARDS A FUTURE OF OPEN AND AFFORDABLE LEARNING

Following this initial success, we are pleased to expand our partnership with Coventry University:
enabling OER adoption University-wide by the start of the next academic year.

LEARN MORE

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

Book a demo

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