

# Access to whose point of view? OER textbooks and social justice

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“To what extent do **OER texts** have the potential to act as **social justice** initiatives in Australian Higher Ed as they do overseas?”

Overarching Research Question

# Building on previous research

- USA, Canada, South Africa, UK, Australia
- A **social justice approach**: evaluates the “impact of initiatives in terms of the way that learners who by circumstance have less are able to be provided with more **resources, recognition** or **representation** (Lambert 2018: 241).”
- Part of a conversation globally about widening access and success for learners who are historically under-represented in higher education

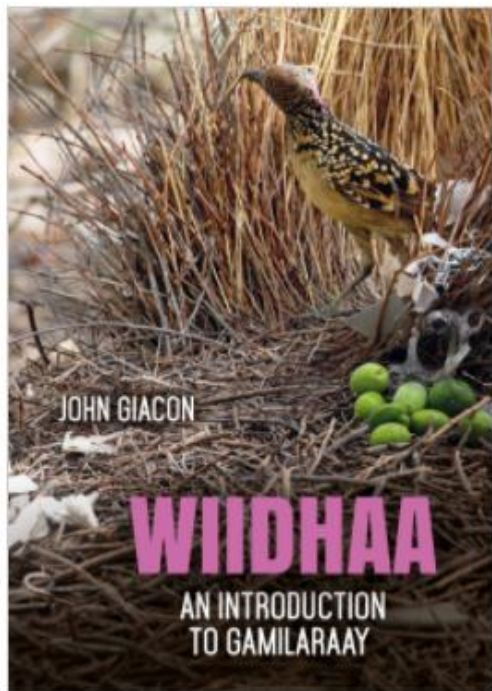
# What is an open textbook?

- Open Textbooks are a recent innovation in free, digital texts that can be: distributed at no cost; printed at cost-price; and modified for local needs, such as to correct gender, socio-cultural and indigenous under-representations in the curriculum. (Lambert, grant application, forthcoming report)
- integrate multimedia, H5P, remix different, components
- “...written by academics and disciplinary experts, and are subject to a range of quality assurance methods. ...They are also conducive to multi-authorship strategies and participatory content development processes, integrating the learner in resource development and providing opportunities for pedagogical innovation (Cox et al., 2020, p. 2).”

# ANU Press

(OA Press)

ANU Press brochure (2020): >921 titles  
“ANU Press was the first and is now the largest open access university press in the world”, has a series on Indigenous knowledges and topics



## Wiidhaa

### An Introduction to Gamilaraay

Authored by: John Giacon 

Buy print (\$50.00)

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22459/W.2019>

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PDF chapters


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“The first Indigenous language etextbook, which revives and preserves the Gamilaraay language”

# Business Writing For Everyone

Arley Cruthers

*Business Writing For Everyone* is an inclusive guide to writing in the workplace. The book takes a process-oriented, storytelling approach to composition: focusing less on genre and more on the decisions that effective business communicators make. *Business Writing For Everyone* also contains interactive H5P activities for students to test their learning, and activities for further reflection that instructors can use in the classroom or assign as homework.

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# Business Writing for Everyone

- By Arley Cruthers, see the [adaptation statement](#)
- Canadian content, changed names to reflect classroom composition, Gender neutral language, First Nations representation and recognition
- “The author also collaborated with Brenda Fernie, who is the president of Seyem, the economic development branch of the Kwantlen Nation, to produce a series of narratives that connect to the topic explored in the book.”

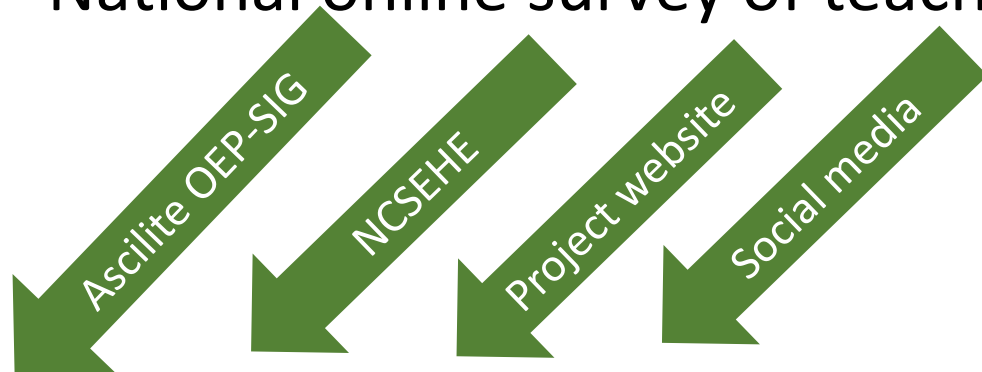
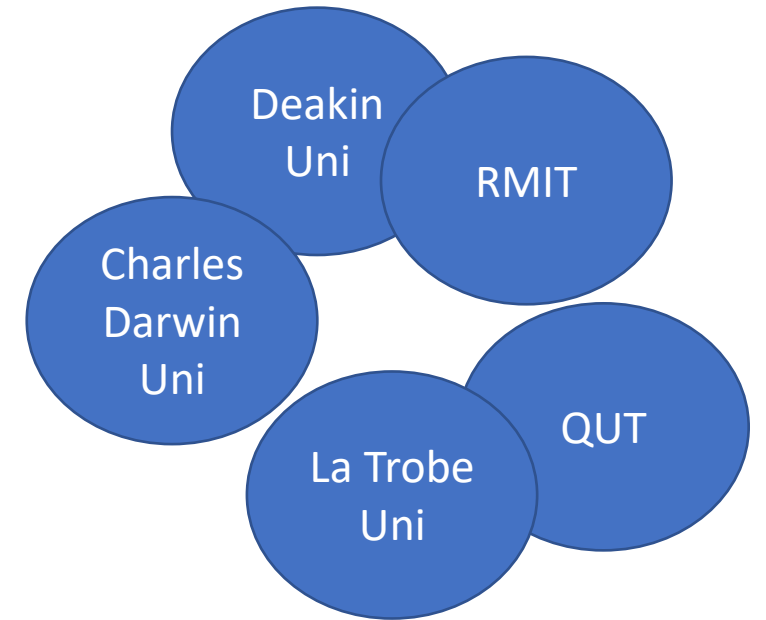
# Diversifying OpenStax Psychology text

- Nusbaum, A.T., 2020. Who Gets to Wield Academic Mjolnir?: On Worthiness, Knowledge Curation, and Using the Power of the People to Diversify OER. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education*, 2020(1), p.4. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/jime.559>
- **Impact:** “Overall, first-generation students had a reduced sense of belonging related to their financial circumstances. However, this effect was ameliorated for first-generation students who read the diversified chapter, compared to those who read the original chapter.”
- NB: Sarah Ahmed writes about the increased emotional effort required to fit in to an organization, if you’re seen as different



# Open Textbook as Social Justice: research

- 62 interviews
  - 19 students at 2 unis
    - Mix of Masters and undergraduate, local and international
  - 43 staff at 5 unis
    - Key staff: libraries, eLearning, leadership/policy
    - OER adopters, adapters and authors
- National online survey of teaching staff



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# Beyond access as free texts and resources

- Access, Yes – no cost or low cost very important (economic angle on social justice)
- But also: Access to whose perspectives? Whose knowledge?
- Who gets to be an expert in your field?
- Key theme for OER authors/adopters: overcoming white-washing
- Indigenous and global cultural knowledges
- Gender representation as a given, but not a focus of staff interviewee narratives as it was for student interviewees

# Research: Do the students care?

- **Recognitive and representational justice**
- Many said it depends on the topic
  - Foundations topics thought to be less important (“maths is just maths”)
  - Social sciences and health very important, “applied” topics
- Most students provided examples of under-representation of women and indigenous people as both authors and topics for the textbook
- Some provided examples of under-representation of Asian and non-white people, Euro-centrism
- Some also provided positive examples of representation - exceptions

# A very rich reflection...

- S09 “It [content]’s not representative of anyone. The photographs tend to be dominated by white people for a start and they don't look Australian. Most of the time I think they just use stock photo library. And the content is very often very Eurocentric so you don't get input from a lot of scholarly material that's out there from Asia or India and there's an enormous amount of Indian work on [topic X] for instance.”

# Gendered racism front of mind...

- **Recognitive and representational justice – life experience**
- S07 provided a long and passionate narrative about personal experiences of gendered racism in her work life and practicum/internship placement
- S07 didn't take any time to think about it: **“barely women are mentioned. It's all about the men. Even the textbook for retail management, which is a female dominated workforce, did not have women visible in it.”**
- [Presentation 10/11/20: Recording and slides](#) focus on student data

# “What a great idea! I didn’t think of that!”

- Both student and staff interviewees - recognitive and representation justice ideas were not front of mind
- Staff interviewees usually embraced them enthusiastically and grasped the importance right away

# Staff active and interested in diversification

- Many good examples of Australian staff actively working to diversify their texts
  - Curation of more diverse reading lists
  - Adoption of OER as bringing the text up to date
  - Authoring of more diverse textbooks - both OER and commercial
- Staff survey data
  - 73% interested in adapting for Australian context (n=107)
  - 67% interested in adapting to diversify content (n=106)
  - 66% interested in being part of a community to author textbooks (n=105)

# Inclusive Education: Dr Ben Whitburn, Deakin

- Evaluated an OER text (from USQ) in 2020 for adoption in 2021
- “Firstly, inclusive education is a fast-moving area, the unit I was interested in drawing on an open access textbook was using a commercial textbook published in 2012. It’s out of date, it lacks a number of elements including indigenous education, it lacks focus on curriculum. There is a great opportunity with OER texts to pick up a resource that grows with the knowledge of the field.”
- The USQ OER text is downloadable it in different formats inc html, which for staff and students using screen-readers like Ben, is a lifesaver.



# Inclusive Education: Dr Ben Whitburn, Deakin

- “I went back to the learning outcomes and the assessment. What I did was to compare both books and compare one framework against the other. There is some content that is non-negotiable, this unit must have information about the legislative frameworks for students with disabilities for example. I also ticked off the bits of the material that I really like in the new book, and then I saw what was missing. The old book has a great chapter on the problems of naming and labelling people for example.”
- Ben said he would make up for the few gaps in the new text with papers and maybe even a few chapters from the current text.

# Nursing: Kelly Menzel, Deakin Uni

- Motivation
- Strategic imperative to embed indigenous knowledges in the curriculum Deakin-wide as part of institutional focus on implementing Graduate Outcome 8 Global Citizenship.
- Desire to work collaboratively with other indigenous staff, students and allies to develop specific local cases of Nursing in indigenous communities lacking in current textbooks.
- “and that ties in really well with an indigenous knowledge paradigm where you've got that collectivity of sharing of knowledge”

# Nursing: Kelly Menzel, Deakin Uni

- Action:
- Slow and steady approach, starting with a small group of interested authors to publish mini-cases CC-BY-NC on the Deakin “Nursing on Country” blog. These could be packaged into a textbook in the future.

# Social Science academic

- Motivation
- Through conducting PhD fieldwork, the academic could see the inequalities with white researchers and indigenous communities, and thus, didn't want to replicate these inequalities.

# Social Science academic

- Action:
- Wrote a dictionary of an endangered language in partnership with a First Nations community
- Author of a commercial introductory text incorporating Indigenous perspectives, issues with restrictive digital licensing
- Has used OER platform to republish PhD research in support of both teaching and free access to the research for the community.

# Cultural Capability: Dr Johanna Funk, CDU

- Motivation
- Bringing unit concepts and open textbook example to align with Australian context
- Students consistently rate highly this unit which is designed inclusively and recognises First Nations and global perspectives. The subject both models and provides opportunities for students to think through issues from multiple perspectives as part of the tasks and assessments.

# Cultural Capability: Dr Johanna Funk, CDU

- Reading list available online, with diverse authors.
- Adopted an OER text in 2019. Adapted it in 2020 by working with students to publish 4 of their assessed case studies.
- Addition of [4 new case study chapters written by students](#)
- Each case was the students' major assignment
- Dr Funk tweaked the assessment in 2020 to give students **the option** to publish their work
  - co-ordinated, reviewed/quality checked their work, modified in PressBooks

# CONTENTS

HIDE ALL CONTENTS

Introduction

## I. Principles of Capability

1. Cultural Capability in Australian Case Studies

2. Creating safe work spaces for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people

3. Dirt Cheap 30 Years On; Uranium Mining on Aboriginal Territory in Kakadu

4. Discrimination against Asians during COVID19

5. #toostrongforyoukaren ; Racism against Aboriginal Australians in rural Victoria

6. References



# Archaeology: Dr Keir Strickland, La Trobe

- Hasn't used Open texts due to not finding the right material. However is interested in open education textbooks.
- Has nuanced understandings of the need for both local, indigenous and global examples and has a lot of Indigenous content already due to the fact that graduates will most likely be working in that area.

# Archaeology: Dr Keir Strickland, La Trobe

- In an ideal world would like to have the time to develop 2 open-access core texts which they could use across their courses at La Trobe as well as by colleagues in other unis teaching similar courses focussing on Asian and Australian archaeology rather than European or classics.
- Adoption by others: “And of course, the nice thing about it being open access is, it doesn't matter if that person’s course doesn't entirely reflect what I'm teaching because even if only 20% of my open access text is relevant. There's no cost to the students.”

# International Studies

- Interviewee doesn't think it's good to set a text and expect students to pay for it if they only use a portion of it, setting a OER text "gives you the freedom to set a book, but without the obligation to feel as if you're making full use of it. So it's really one of the attractions for open access for me."
- Wrote an OER text with other authors which is one of the suggested readings on a diverse reading list for a subject they teach.

# International Studies

- While representation was not a particular objective, the authors balance the need for global and local perspectives. They write about place acknowledging indigenous, colonial and migrant histories.
- "Some of the chapters have you almost walking with the author through Melbourne, past the library, and narrating the colonial and indigenous history as you go along. It is a global book, but it is also anchored in the localities of the authors who are engaging actively with issues of gender and culture."

# Academic RMIT Vietnam

- Motivation
- Substantial under-representation of Vietnamese culture in both textbooks and research.
- Academics rely on links to YouTube, local news and social media to provide current Vietnamese examples but would like to extend this to more formal scholarly outputs.
- Part of the vision is to do this by working with more local students as they progress through post-graduate programs at the Vietnam campus.

# Academic at RMIT Vietnam

- Informed by earlier experiences publishing a commercial textbook on research methods which while still helpful, is out of date. Publisher declines to update it and put out a new edition.
- Aspiration to publish in open-access for wider impact and no restrictions on topic due to what is judged to be “commercial”.

# Management: Dr Siew-Mee Barton, Deakin

- Motivation
- The commercial textbook is really out of date and lacks Australian content and cases.
- Has a large international student cohort who are interested to share their experiences of managing cross-cultural issues in workplaces.

# Management: Dr Siew-Mee Barton, Deakin

- Is looking to adopt an OER textbook in 2021 after reviewing it in 2020.
- Piloted modifying an assignment so that students were encouraged to share their experiences of managing cross-cultural issues in workplaces through the online discussions.
- The potential to publish these were explored in 2020 but COVID19 interrupted the process. More time was needed to ensure students understood open publishing and could give informed consent for publishing their work.



# Other approaches: lectures, discussion

- Some staff (and students) noted they handled equitable recognition and representation in lectures or discussions
- Similarly, Australian examples and cases were often given in lectures to supplement the examples given in the textbook (from elsewhere, global, “universal”)
- Issue: when the textbook takes a deficit approach and uses deficit language (to indigenous people and communities) and this clashes with what is modelled in lectures
  - One academic said this tripped students up when writing their assignments, they relied on the language of the textbook

# Powerful actions for academics!

- **Review readings lists for diversity:** are you up to date? Gender balanced? Local and global?
- **Ask for help diversifying your reading list:** discipline network and/or Library and/or your Twitter network
- **Search for OER in your discipline,** library LibGuide
- Start or continue **amplifying Indigenous authors** by citing them and adding them to your reading lists
- **Form a team to author a new OER text:** where will diverse and up-to-date perspectives come from?

# Powerful cross-uni collaborative actions!

## “Wonder-twin powers, activate!”

Help your institution connect the dots between:

- your Diversity policies and Digital Learning strategies
- OER/teaching and OA/research: form a co-alition and work together
- Libraries and L&T centres: PressBooks is GO!



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- Note: this article describes and evaluates a project to diversity the OpenStax Psychology textbook through an open call to review, annotate and improve the textbook. A fascinating paper with plenty of practical detail on the mechanics of the project and the impact on First in Family students at university