# Chapter 3
# Supporting Digital Information Literacy in the Age of Open Access:
## Considerations for Online Course Design

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## ABSTRACT

*In this chapter, the authors aim to inform the audience about the issues pertaining to access to educational resources, with a focus on open access; how to access such sources; ways of integrating principles of information literacy into the entire educational experience; and the potential of open access sources in providing much needed, affordable information literacy to all knowledge seekers, especially in academic endeavors. The issue of information literacy and open access is defined and explored, with a bias toward practical implementation and impact in the academic setting, culminating in hands-on recommendations for academic professionals.*

## INTRODUCTION

Advances in technology have brought about a plethora of benefits in many fields of human endeavor, including in education and learning. Following the trend to infuse more technology in educational settings, educational research has shifted its focus from previously dominant philosophies (behaviorism and cognitivism) to more encompassing ideology (constructivism and connectivism) that promotes the use of technology in creating widely accessible and socially inclusive ubiquitous learning experiences. Based on such changes in the perceptions of how learning takes place, and how content necessary for learning can or should be accessed, different pathways for designing and delivering information have emerged.

With the advent of online platforms specifically created for managing and sharing knowledge and information in the new era, the expected increase in using connected networks for delivering and accessing information has been ongoing for almost two decades. Along with that new paradigm, shifts in the way content is designed and delivered as well as theories supporting these ideas have been constant. Moving rapidly from e-learning to m-learning to ubiquitous learning, both content and access to it seem to have become, in some ways, a hindrance to achieving information literacy in an otherwise digitally connected world.

Regardless of any technologies or their benefits to learning, creating content and enabling prospective learners' access to it has and shall always remain a necessity. Content for the most part has been the mainstay of large commercial publishing companies, and costs of educational and scholarly materials have been on the rise for several decades. Education costs in the United States, for instance, have had a multi-fold increase against the rate of inflation since the early 1980s (Roubides, 2018). New approaches in the development and dissemination of educational and scholarly content have been the goal of new movements, such as the open educational resources (OER) and open access scholarship movements, which contribute to a ubiquitous learning environment by allowing more people access to content without limitations in time and space.

Promotion of and interest in open content, whether in the form of open access scholarship, which is usually funded by public institutions, hence taxpayer money, or in the form of OER, which can be used to develop formal or informal, academic and non-academic learning experiences, have been growing in recent years. While teaching and learning issues surrounding OER have been garnering increased attention (see, e.g. Colvard, Watson, & Park, 2018; Lawrence & Lester, 2018; Winitsky-Stephens & Pickavance, 2018), the spotlight being shined on open access of scholarship (henceforth, *open access*) has often focused on economic viability (see, e.g. Frankland & Ray, 2017; Jack, 2017) and on the perspectives of the producers of such scholarship (see, e.g. Rowley, Johnson, Sbaffi, Frass, & Devine, 2017; Watson, 2018) with little attention given to the impact on learners as consumers of information products.

This chapter will discuss considerations for online course designers who seek to assist learners in meeting the digital information literacy demands created by open access. Online course designers in this context may include anyone who works alone or as part of an online course design team, from instructional designers to subject matter experts or instructors. The chapter includes trends in open access publishing of which online course designers should be aware; discusses of the role of libraries in helping learners obtain open access materials; and proposes the use of the Association of College & Research Libraries' Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education as a lens for understanding what concepts are important to learners when working with open access materials. The chapter culminates in a summary of recommendations for course designers.

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