

Open access: necessary but insufficient for societal change?

Bruce Herbert (1) and David Carlson (2)

(1) Texas A&M University, Orcid 0000-0002-6736-1148, (2) Texas A&M University, Orcid 0000-0002-3548-8646

The internet has brought great change to human society, but even after 20 years, the impact of the internet has been uneven. As attributed to William Gibson, “The future is already here — it’s just not very evenly distributed”. It is reasonable to predict that the societal impact of open access will be similar.

In 2015, we were approached by a rural, secondary school in the midst of a major transformation of their science education seeking help with their lack of access of library resources. The school district was in the midst of major reform initiative seeking to enhance the college readiness of their students through a transformation of student learning via problem-based learning. This west Texas school district is dominated by at-risk students who have not traditional experienced success in the American K12 education system.

The Texas A&M University Libraries designed a portal that bypassed the need for authentication and allows a user to search through a collection of open access materials. Working with EBSCO, the vendor from which we licensed our discovery layer, we created a portal that aggregated open access materials and making them accessible to the public. This dedicated portal draw materials identified as open access from the EBSCO Index, a meta-aggregation of scholarly resources of global and regional importance, including journal articles, e-books, reviews, legal documents and more.

We tracked the use of our Open Access portal by the K12 students. This flash talk will discuss the impact of the project, and show how the portal supports a Texas A&M University – K12 School District reforming their science, technological, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. While open access directly supported K12 student success, the portal design had to accommodate the specific needs of this community in order to support this outcome.