

## *Getting Started with Pressbooks*



## Getting Started with Pressbooks

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York University Libraries



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Pressbooks is an open-source, open access plug-in that can be installed to augment an installation of WordPress. The Pressbooks module was built on top of WordPress due to broad familiarity, adoption, and relative ease of use of the WordPress platform.

The plug-in was initially developed to empower the average user with the ability to publish professionally designed textual outputs with ease. Pressbooks allows users to convert their publications into professional-quality files without having to know anything about book design or ebook development. Users can choose from a variety of designs or can customize existing layouts to their liking. Being of the web, Pressbooks is optimized for online viewing but is also interoperable with, and allows for export to, a variety of open and/or portable formats including ePUB, MOBI and PDF.

While initially designed to support the publishing of monographs, Pressbooks can also be used to support the publishing of conference and symposium proceedings, grey literature, journal articles, course syllabi, dissertations, and more.

Of particular note is the wide adoption of Pressbooks in support of the creation of open textbooks and open educational resources (OER) more broadly. The broad adoption of Pressbooks by institutions across North America allows for an ease of interoperability of content between Pressbooks installations, facilitated by additional functionality developed and contributed by the broader community.

## The promise of educational resources (OER)

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation offer the following definition for OER:

“OER are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others. Open educational resources include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge.”<sup>1</sup>

While the scope and impact potential of open educational resources is very broad, there are key elements to OER that make possible this breadth of possibility. Most important is the concept of open licensing.

The utility and proliferation of OER hinges on open licensing. This necessity is baked into the widespread understanding and definition of OER itself. The CC-BY license (attribution only) makes possible the adoption, editing and repurposing of educational resources.<sup>2</sup> This ability to recombine, rework, and remix in the service of discrete and varied learning outcomes is one of the greatest strengths of OER.

The Pressbooks platform leverages the affordances of open publishing and makes possible, almost effortlessly, new forms of authorship. It enables authors to import (subject to licensing) entire or selected elements of existing OER in a seamless fashion, allowing the author to modify and re-compose the work to suit their needs and the needs of their students. The Pressbooks interface makes it possible

1. <https://www.hewlett.org/strategy/open-educational-resources/>

2. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

to impose unifying formatting, a professional appearance, and the creation of a number of digital surrogates to suit different reader needs.

## Benefits of Open Educational Resources

The broad adoption and uptake of OER is borne of the many benefits offered by the model. The following list offers a glimpse:<sup>3</sup>

- Saves costs for students
- Grants access to more quality choices
- Helps preparation for course and retention of knowledge after course
- More clarity and/or certainty regarding reuse of materials
- Contributes towards student success
- Helps with student recruiting and retention

Additional benefits intersect with the broader gains realized by a culture of openness:

- Showcases research to widest possible audience
- Enhances a university's reputation as well as that of the teacher or researcher
- Social responsibility – provides education for all
- Shares best practice internationally
- Allows for peer review
- Maximizes the use and increases availability of educational materials
- Raises standard of educational resources by gathering more contributors

Nadia Mireles. "Open Education Matters: Why is it important to share content?"

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Book design and Pressbooks?**

Pressbooks ensures your book conforms to all the best practices of book publishing and takes care of the graphic design and coding for you. There is no need to write markup or have a designer's eye. Pressbooks has beautifully designed print and ebook templates, with choices that should most needs.

### **Importing**

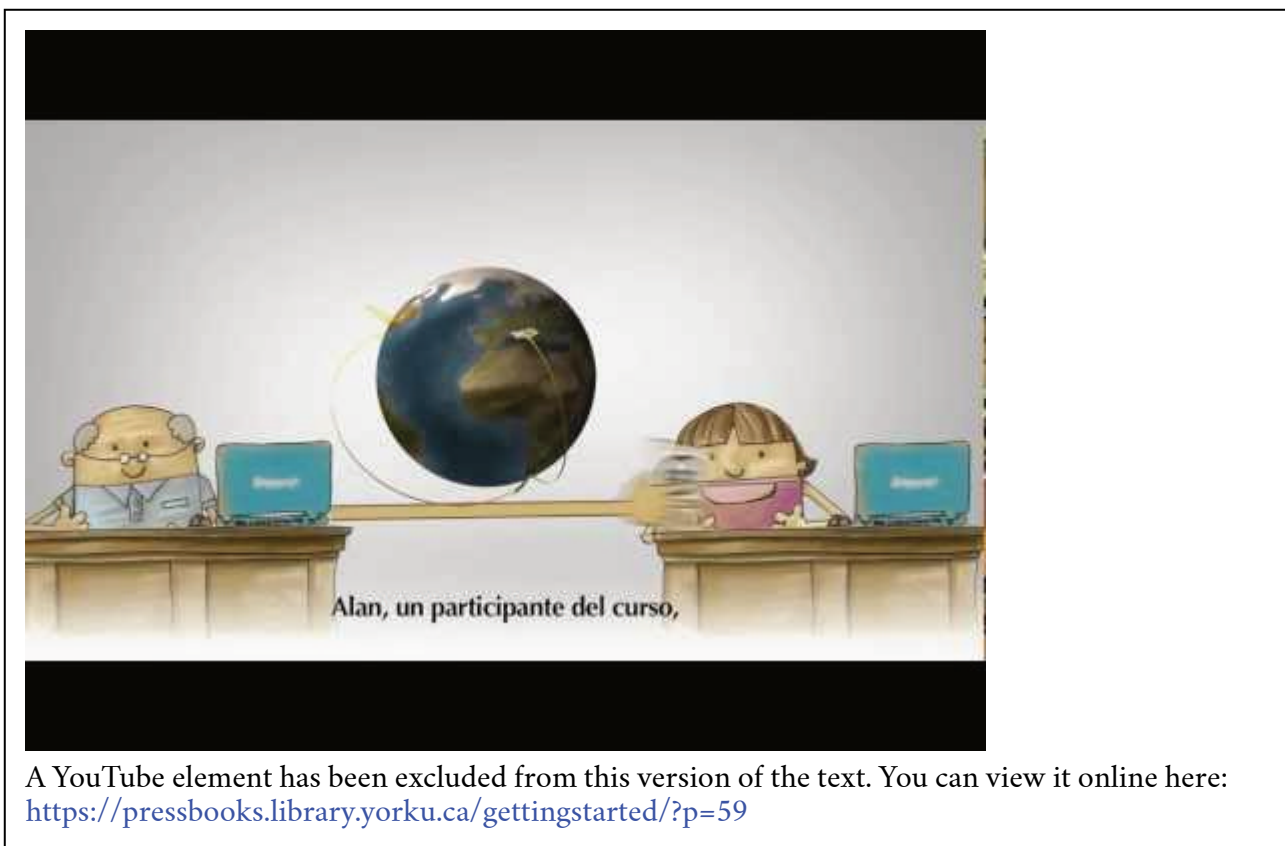
PressBooks allows text to be imported from various file formats, including MS Word, and EPub.

### **Documentation**

Pressbooks is built to be easy enough for you to use yourself. There is a growing collection of resources

3. <https://training.instructure.com/courses/1276118/pages/what-are-the-benefits-in-using-oer>





to help you get started, including guides to help ensure your PressBook conforms to accessible guidelines.

### Where can I search for OER?

OERs are now easier to find than ever. George Mason University worked with a tech company to create a single search interface, a type of “Google for OERs”. It is called the [Mason Metafinder](#).



York University Libraries is currently piloting the Pressbook platform as a means of supporting the AIF Project: Digital Humanities and Social Sciences (DHSS) for Teaching & Learning. Among the outcomes of this pilot is the amassing and creation of onboarding documentation for Pressbooks and library development of expertise with the platform. The training documentation is [openly accessible](#) as it is being created. The libraries are happy to offer York community members accounts to engage with the Platform.

The Libraries manage the Pressbooks installation, offer troubleshooting help with the Platform, keep up with upgrades and install plugins as they emerge. It is also possible to arrange a meeting time to consult with a librarian/archivist for additional help with the platform. While the Libraries are unable to help with design customization, the strength of the Pressbooks platform is that it offers a wealth of design options to choose from, and also allows users to explore customizing existing designs.



This is what we hope will become a York crowd-sourced community guide to learning how to use Pressbooks. As we work together to learn and make best use of the platform, this guide will be a place where we can share what we've learned. Sections and chapters will likely emerge as shorter notes are expanded and become detailed instructions.

If you can't find help with what you're looking for, please add it to the "Questions you or others have about Pressbooks" chapter and someone from the community will take up your cause and add some helpful information to the guide to help you out.

The Digital Scholarship team will begin to flesh out this guide with a very basic onboarding tutorial for Pressbooks, explaining the many features of Pressbooks and how they support open education.

### Existing guides

Pressbooks User Guide: <https://guide.pressbooks.com/>

Pressbooks for Higher Education: <https://steelwagstaff.info/getting-started-with-pressbooks-a-guide-for-higher-education-use-cases>

Pressbooks 101: <https://wisc.pb.unizin.org/pressbooks101>

Open Textbook Authoring and Sharing Guide – Saskatchewan Polytechnic: <http://open.beyond8.ca/authoringguide/>

B.C. Open Textbook Pressbooks Guide

### Resources

#### Planning your Pressbook

[How to Make and Self-Publish a Book \(and Where Pressbooks Fits in\)](#)

[Support for adapting and Open Textbook](#)

#### Styling and layout

[Style guide example](#)

#### Accessibility

[BC Open Textbook Accessibility Toolkit](#) The goal of the *Accessibility Toolkit* is to provide the needed resources needed to create a truly open and accessible textbook — one that is free and accessible for all students.



Are you wondering if something is possible? Or what will happen if you do a particular thing? Or can't quite get something to work in a certain way? Here's a spot where you can add your questions!

[How to create a table using the TablePress plugin, and add it to a chapter](#)

What are the [differences between levels of users](#) in Pressbooks (Subscriber, Contributor, Author, Editor, Administrator)?





The Libraries has created a list-serv to manage group discussions related to the creation of OERs.

Please report any bugs, issues, questions and concerns to the list-serv.

List-serv email: [YUL-OERS-LIST@listserv.yorku.ca](mailto:YUL-OERS-LIST@listserv.yorku.ca)

A public forum is in development. Details on how to join and participate in this online community will be posted here when they become available.







