

Textbook Marketing

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UCL Press published two open access e-textbooks with Jisc as part of the 'Institution as e-textbook publisher project'. [Textbook of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery](#) was in June 2016, and [Key Concepts in Public Archaeology](#) in September 2017. To the end of March 2018, content from [Textbook of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery](#) had been downloaded 30,056 times in 159 countries and territories, and content from [Key Concepts in Public Archaeology](#) had been downloaded 6978 times in 109 countries and territories. Though both books have been popular in both the UK and US, both books have been widely downloaded across the world.

In a previous post, we discussed how the textbooks were disseminated; both textbooks are available in a variety of formats, each requiring a different strategy in order to reach the target readership. For this blog post, we'll concentrate on our open access formats (PDF, HTML and app) and how we marketed the textbooks.

The titles that UCL Press published benefited from a dedicated Marketing and Distribution Manager who has extensive experience in marketing textbooks, and whose role at the Press is to manage the global marketing and dissemination of the c40 books that are produced annually.

Both textbooks are based on popular, well-respected Masters-level courses at UCL, and their publication reflects a UCL Press goal to provide open access textbooks in order to enhance student experience. Open access textbooks provide high-quality educational materials to students, as well as open important research to a wider audience for free. With this in mind, our marketing priorities differ from those of a commercial publisher; and reaching the UCL community is one of our measures of success.

In examining how the textbooks that we have produced have been marketed so far, it's worth noting that textbooks follow a unique pattern — those who make the decision about which book is used (faculty members), aren't the same as those who use the textbook (students) or those who make the book widely available (librarians or booksellers). This cycle still applies with open access, and, though there are fewer barriers to reach the reader directly, students still rely on lecturers in order to signpost relevant reading material, and on librarians to make sure that this content is easily available and discoverable via internal systems. In for the textbooks to be successful in their aims, we needed to reach all three groups.

Adoptions and Reading Lists

The aim of marketing textbooks is to gain adoptions of the books for course usage; in this case, as the books were designed to meet the requirements of UCL students, we needed to ensure that students on these courses could easily access details about the book. We did this by including them on UCL's Reading List system, ensured that they were listed within UCL's library catalogues and that sufficient print copies were available to the library, and that the relevant librarians were aware of the textbooks and could promote them to students.

Marketing by Authors/Editors

The authors and editors of both books have helped to promote the books extensively. Activities that they have undertaken have included emailing information about the books to their contacts, attending conferences with materials, and featuring books on their department communications channels and websites. The authors also emailed their students to let them know about the freely available textbook that has been designed to meet the course needs. The open access nature of the book has been helpful in this regard; the authors are more comfortable in helping to promote a free resource. .

We have been delighted to receive feedback from the editors of [Textbook of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery](#), about the wider reputational benefit to the department and the authors themselves; production of the textbook, and the fact that it is open access, has helped to drive the visibility of the department. We are also working with the department to examine ways for details about the book to be sent to all new students, and for materials about the book to be taken to events that the department are exhibiting at.

Marketing to Students

In addition to including the books on reading lists, we produced a number of materials to support the adoptions. These have included flyers, posters and credit-card sized flyers to help stimulate usage, and were distributed by the course lecturers in lectures and via the library. Additional materials are in production for [Key Concepts in Public Archaeology](#) for the next intake of students for the linked module.

For both textbooks, we also posted announcements to relevant subject-specific student forums, announcing the arrival of a new open access textbook that may be of interest to readers.

Traditional Marketing Materials / Methods

In addition to print flyers, both textbooks were:

- Included in our seasonal catalogues, which are distributed throughout the campus and beyond.
- Listed on the UCL Press website
- Included in our seasonal newsletters
- Mailed to subject specialist email lists

Social Media

Each of the textbooks was promoted widely on Twitter by the Press, the authors/editors, and the relevant UCL department. Engagement rates were high, with tweets and retweets by both individuals and institutions across the globe.

Reviews

Although reviews do not traditionally play a large part in marketing textbooks, we were delighted when *British Archaeology* magazine reviewed *Key Concepts in Public Archaeology*, stating:

'There is a refreshing honesty about the book's approach – it even recognises that most readers will neglect to read the whole thing, but instead will dip in as and when interest or need arise. Littered throughout with concise and well-chosen case studies, *Key Concepts in Public Archaeology* could become essential reading for undergraduates and is a welcome reminder of where archaeology sits in UK society today.'

Metadata and Discoverability

Metadata was provided to organisations within UCL (e.g. UCL Library) and externally (the platforms who distribute our content, print distributors, aggregators etc). More on this is available in our earlier post about [Dissemination, distribution and discovery of e-textbooks](#).