

Creating Custom Textbooks

Textbooks support the instructor and the class. They provide the foundation from which teachers build their class and students build their knowledge. But what happens when the right textbook isn't available?

Let's face it—textbooks can be just as limiting as they can be helpful.

The level, the pacing, the pedagogical approach, the selections, the amount and level of commentary, and more all create a predetermined concept for a class that may not be what the instructor wants or what the class needs. The answer to this problem, when it arises, has often been for the instructor to spend more time creating the supplements the class needs, (illegal) photocopying of supplementary material, or resignation to the course prescribed by the textbook.

This presentation is an extension of a presentation given at ACL in 2012 and introduces a new teaching tool—a platform that allows instructors to create and customize their own textbooks. I begin by giving an overview of advances in electronic books. I delineate both the benefits and the drawbacks of electronic books, from the point-of-view of my experience both in teaching high school and college students and my experience in publishing textbooks. I then introduce a new platform called AcademicPub, to which Bolchazy-Carducci, Cambridge, and Oxford are all contributing texts. AcademicPub provides instructors the ability to create their own textbooks which include a wide variety of materials and are available to students as bound hard copies or electronic books. I walk the audience through the creation of a custom book on the platform, showing them how to include selections from publisher's books, from websites, from online journal databases such as jstor, and from the instructor's own self-authored content and photographs. I finish by providing an outline for successfully creating the most useful custom textbook and include a handout for future reference.