

Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME)

Project Title: Exploring OER Curation And The Role of School Librarians

ISKME proposes a two-year National Leadership Grant Curating Collections Research project (May 2017-April 2019) to better understand the role of school librarians in the national context in the curation and use of open educational resources (OER). ISKME will leverage its established expertise in research and thought leadership in OER and digital librarianship, and existing partnership with Florida State University (FSU) School of Information. The overarching goal is to explore the school librarian role in digital curation in the K-12 ecosystem, and specifically with OER, and to create a framework and set of practical recommendations that address IMLS priorities for advancing effective curation of digital collections to enhance teaching and learning. The project's research findings will be widely disseminated among school leaders, librarians, teachers, and policy makers to validate, and to serve diverse local needs. The IMLS funding request is \$494,864 over two years.

Need: K-12 librarians must be prepared to take on key leadership roles to address informational and instructional resource needs in schools and communities. School librarians play many roles in schools, but a primary role is building and maintaining a resource base for teaching and learning; they locate and organize materials to support curriculum and student interest and make them findable through instructional collaboration, local catalogs, and other outreach strategies. Although K-12 librarians are well poised to take on leadership roles to address these informational and instructional resource needs, they are not typically leveraged or included in strategies, planning, or professional learning to meet their districts' content curation needs (Mardis, et al., 2012).

Spurred by federal initiatives such as [#GoOpen](#), many school districts seek to infuse their curricula with open educational resources (OER) to foster standards-aligned, personalized, deeper learning experiences. As digital and dynamic resources, OER can connect teachers and school librarians to share, discuss, critique, use, reuse, and continuously improve educational content and practice (Petrides & Jimes, 2006; Frydenberg & Matkin, 2007; Geser, 2007; Petrides et al., 2008; Casserly & Smith, 2009). Researchers (e.g., Chingos & Whitehurst, 2012; Maull, et al, 2010) have suggested these efforts rely on an adequate OER supply to support a wide range of teaching and learning needs, and teaching transformation that allows for effective OER application; neither alone is sufficient to realize OER's potential impact.

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Technology has pointed to school librarians as potentially key players in curation and providing professional learning relating to OER implementation. While researchers have suggested facilitating factors for OER use, no comprehensive effort has been undertaken to assess district readiness to deploy school librarians to acquire, describe, manage, and provide (i.e., curate) OER or to foster educators' readiness to use OER. Empirical research is needed to identify enablers, barriers, best practices, and policies for districts, educators, and school librarians toward broad, sustainable, effective OER use. The project's design will center on gaining understanding of the OER ecosystem as well as essential competencies needed by school librarians as instructional leaders and information specialists, and as school leaders to bring new ideas and institutional change in the school and the greater community.

Project Design: The key objectives of the study are to: 1) describe existing patterns of OER curation by K-12 school librarian leaders across a selection of urban and rural school districts, 2) identify challenges and successes in their OER curation practices, and 3) identify ways in which school librarians can take on leadership roles in curating and promoting OER that align with their district's curation strategies and student learning goals. Project research questions include:

- RQ1: How are participating school districts defining their curation approaches and practices? What district and school contextual factors support and promote the role of librarian as a curator?

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- RQ2: What practices do school librarians engage in to find, use, or adapt OER? At which points in the OER curation process do school librarians struggle? Where are they having success?
- RQ3: Which OER are selected and used by participating school librarians? Why are these resources selected (what characteristics?) What quality criteria are school librarians using? How do librarians present and promote their curated materials, including OER, to teachers and students?
- RQ4: What are key conclusions and recommendations for district OER and school librarian practice, research, and policy?

For this study, we will use multiple qualitative methods to examine OER curation practices in five states (FL, NC, NH, WA, and CA) and in partner districts in which school librarians currently exercise roles in curation and instructional leadership. **Data collection activities include:** a) interviews with district leaders to assess current OER curation policies, goals, practices, and challenges [RQ1]; b) face-to-face interviews and field observations of curation practices with 50 participating school librarians (10 in each state) to identify their *in-situ* curation practices and goals [RQ2, RQ3]; and c) state focus groups with participating librarians to assess challenges and successes to their curation practices, and needed supports [RQ2, RQ3]. We will analyze the data using an open, flexible coding approach that will allow us to integrate the data, identify best practices, and begin to generate theory regarding effective OER curation and implementation that can be further explored (IES & NSF, 2013) [RQ4].

Outcomes: At the conclusion of data analysis, we will share the findings via interactive webinars with participating school librarians to create a framework that illustrates the state of their OER curation practices, variations in those practices, and supports needed to strengthen those practices and policies generally. Subsequently, we will use a peer review process to affirm the findings—presenting the emergent OER curation framework to an additional 50 peers of participating librarians—to determine validation by these practitioners. We will also initiate conversations with additional school districts, librarians, and researchers in the field to identify the extent to which the findings and framework meet with general consensus of the wider practitioner community. This phase will improve the quality of the findings and prepare researchers to further develop findings through subsequent exploratory research.

Dissemination: We will broadly share project findings to a) leverage existing large networks of stakeholders, including ISKME's OER Commons, FSU, #GoOpen, Future Ready, IMLS grantees, AASL/ALA and other professional societies, to solicit librarians' and school districts' assistance to identify appropriate venues to disseminate results; b) identify high-profile national and regional conferences for presentations and include participants to co-present/co-facilitate; c) leverage our social media presences to build participation and awareness of the findings. **References:** <http://bit.ly/2bCLtKy>.

National Impact: With growing national calls for OER and open education practices, the timely project will offer: Increased understanding of OER curation practices and models that school librarian leaders are utilizing; Increased knowledge for districts on the implementation and supports required to meet curation standards and goals, with an informed lens on OER curation and use; Identification of measures to assess the relationships between successful OER curation practices, school librarian instructional leadership, and the diverse needs for teachers and learners nationally, which can inform policy and practice, including in continuing education and pre-service programs; Increased understanding on what steps might be taken to help educators in their efforts to find high-quality resources.

Budget: The total project budget is \$494,864 over 2 years: ISKME is requesting \$245,224 for salaries and wages, which includes \$39,153 in fringe benefits. Project partners will receive \$33,000 and contractors \$79,610 for additional research support. Travel for team members to perform case studies and focus groups in each of five (5) participating states is \$24,450; meeting space, food & beverage, and materials for meetings are \$13,250. The project includes the participation of 50 librarians, who will receive stipends of \$35,000 and travel stipends \$5,000 to attend the case study and focus group meetings. Indirect Costs are 15% of \$395,534, or \$59,330.