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Prompt: What's wrong with the way we approach education today?

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Well, I think when people ask me about what open education

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… it's really good to ask about what contemporary education

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looks like, and the opposite of open would be closed.

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So, right now we have a situation where most of our students

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don't have access to the course materials that we consider

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to be required. We want to create an environment in which we

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create meaningful, authentic learning experiences for them,

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but we deprive them of our course materials by not thinking

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about access, and accessibility. We want them to become

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skillful, but yet we ask them to do things in which they do

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not see the greater purpose or meaning, and create objects

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that will only be seen by one person. So, I think open

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education allows us to reconsider what we consider to be

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normal practice in education in a way that unleashes

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pedagogical innovation and student potential.

Prompt: What are the barriers that we have to overcome to pursue open educational practices?

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Well, I think anytime one talks about innovation in teaching

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it involves revisiting, questioning assumptions about

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pedagogy about one's teaching philosophy, but there are also

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structural barriers in place. You think about traditional

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learning management systems where we host our courses,

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and each course is completely separate like its own little

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silo, like knowledge is discreet and not interdisciplinary,

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and not interactive, and not cumulative. So I think the

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barriers are mostly mental, are mostly psychological, and

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thereby structural as well in terms of how universities are

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structured, how programs are structured, and how instructors

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are used to obtaining, disseminating the instructional

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resources.

Prompt: So what is 'open education?'

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Open education is really about intent. The philosophy of

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openness is about sharing. It's about collaboration.

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It's about transparency, and accountability. It's about

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developing personally and as a scholar in a way that

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is not hidden. Open education in its simplest form would

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involve using and even producing resources that are

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available to the commons, to the public, not hidden,

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but it would also involve students producing resources for

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the commons and not just for the instructor, and in many

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ways, open education, I think, reflects a similar sentiment

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that we're seeing in scholarship. The drive for open

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scholarship and open science practices. Why should,

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for example, the Canadian tax paying public that are funding

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much of the research at our institutions… We ask [them] to pay an

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additional $45 to reap the fruits of that labor.

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There's a lot of things that we do everyday that are deeply

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questionable and open education starts to pull at those

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threads just a little bit.

Prompt: So, how do you change things?

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Well, I think practically, in my experience a lot of

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instructors don't know about open education - a lot of

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faculty. So, part of it is awareness-raising, and when

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people start to get a sense of what is out there they start

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to realize how much they haven't been questioning.

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Faculty love to talk about academic freedom and we love

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getting on our high horse about it, but I think when it

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comes to our pedagogy, we don't think about our academic

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freedom often enough. So, again, in my experience it's about

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awareness, and after that, experiencing it, and I haven't

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seen very few people look back once they've jumped into the

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open water.

Prompt: Are open educational practice materials of the same quality as existing educational materials?

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So open educational resources vary greatly in quality.

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Much the same I might add, as traditional course materials.

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But we do know, for example, major major surveys in the

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United States, and now in British Columbia as well, that the

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majority of faculty view open educational resources as the

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same as or superior in quality to traditional materials,

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and part of the reason why they view it as superior is

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because they're not locked in a proprietary platform,

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and you're able to move from doing what many of us do now,

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which is, I think most instructors now bend their courses to

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map onto the structure of a traditional textbook, whereas

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what we ought to be doing is modifying the instructional

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materials to suit, serve and suit our pedagogical in-course

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course, and it's those additional permissions to revise,

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to remix, to adapt, to contextualize the resources

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themselves, and even involve our students in that process.

That really unleashes the potential of high-quality OER.

Prompt: Why should students care about open educational resources?

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Well, I think students oddly enough have the most to gain

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over here. In terms of access, tremendously. Whether it's

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cost savings or portability or permanent access. Imagine if

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students did not have to take out a student loan to buy

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their course materials for a semester. If they didn't have

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to choose between groceries and textbooks. If they didn't

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feel compelled to resell their resources at the end of the

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semester, if they were interested in lifelong learning,

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and could keep those resources, but beyond all of that, it's

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also the potential of open pedagogy for students to

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participate in the creation of resources. To complete

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meaningful assignments that will be seen by more than

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just their instructor. For their work to truly be an

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electronic portfolio that serves them and represents

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who they are.

Prompt: What about ownership over open educational resources?

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They're typically based on creative commons licenses,

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and there's any number of them and for somebody who doesn't

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know what they look like, they a bit like hieroglyphics

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initially, but the nice thing is, it allows the person who

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creates these resources to choose in advance how anybody

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else in the future might be in track with them, whether they

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are allowed to just reuse them but just give them credit

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always. Whether you would permit other people to use them

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even for commercial purposes, that's up to you. Whether you

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wish to mandate that anyone who uses or revises or tweaks

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or makes a derivative work from your resources must similar

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to you share it with the public with a similar license.

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With an open educational resource, it's typically the author

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that holds the license, and the author that would assign a

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creative commons license that they would like. Creative

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commons licenses are issued in perpetuity, so you can't

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revoke them if you say that it's open and anyone can use it,

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it's open and anyone can use it, absolutely, but you will

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always be credited as the source of that, but I think

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there's many reasons why universities are doing this

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more and more, whether it's MIT engaging in the production

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of OpenCourseWare, or Rice University in Houston with

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massive OpenStax college initiative, and I think part of it

is about universities themselves rethinking what they

stand for. It's not about the content. MIT says, "Here, take

our content because that's not what you come to MIT for.

It's not the information." Especially today, anyone with a

smartphone, and if they know where to look, has access to

everything that's in a textbook that I could possibly give

them. They come to me for something much more than content,

and I think that's part of the realization. This move away

from territoriality, and this move in terms of embracing

innovation, and giving it away without losing control.