

Applicant Organization: City University of New York (CUNY)

Name of organization submitting: CUNY Office of Library Services

Proposal Amount: \$28,500

Proposal title: A model for a scalable peer review process for OER and library-based open publishing.

Project Goal: OER has the potential to upend traditional textbook publishing, reenergize libraries and library-based publishing, and “explode” the classroom. But recognition for this vital work in tenure and promotion will not happen without a scalable model for peer review. As CUNY launches its new Open Press, the goal with this project is to develop a new, collaborative, and open peer review model rather than import traditional peer review.

Project Description: Higher education is engaged in collective soul searching about the tenure and promotion process— what should “count” and how the process can better support organizational challenges like DEI, student success, retention, and enrollment. At the same time, traditional forms of peer review are increasingly under critique for boundary policing, being pro forma, and compromised as a safeguard of accuracy in research. Yet peer reviewed publication remains the “coin of the realm” in the T&P process, and lack of peer review (and the prestige and legitimacy it brings) is cited as a primary barrier to participation in innovative, mission-driven forms of publishing like OER. However, importing traditional peer review methods and norms into OER publishing would create a mismatch between the values of OER and the way we evaluate it.

The need to address OER peer review was clarified during the planning process for CUNY’s nascent Open Press. We conducted structured interviews with other library publishing programs and university open presses that publish OER textbooks, and while we heard that peer review remains a challenge, we did not hear systemic, innovative solutions to this problem. What we heard was either related to open access journals or mirrored traditional commercial textbook publishers’ method of engaging subject experts. Open peer review models in scholarly publishing are out there and have been since at least the turn of the 21st century, and post publication reviews of OER are a common and accepted form of quality assurance in the field, but what we have not discovered is a pre-publication peer review model for OER.

Our proposal is to benchmark current practices around open peer review specific to OER, pilot a method of open peer review with the first books of our nascent CUNY Open Press, and share our findings in a way that can be duplicated. With its deep network of faculty expertise and unique mission, CUNY is the ideal institution to develop this model. We anticipate further benefits in terms of connecting researchers and collaborators across disciplines and CUNY campuses– another recurring theme in our planning process. Providing a model for the peer review of OER will benefit library publishing programs and other library based OER programs who are looking to improve the quality and increase the legitimacy of the OER produced by their programs and increase the possibility of collaboration between programs. We believe this is a need that if filled will deeply benefit the community.

As described above, our project has three phases. The first (July-August 2023) is to engage in a formal benchmarking process that explores, documents, and openly shares current needs, practices, and existing models in open peer review. The second phase (September 2023-April 2024) will use these findings to develop and pilot a new peer review process for 3 OER textbooks, across disciplines, selected to be part of the new CUNY Open Press. The third phase (May-June 2024) will entail creating a final report that includes the model and related documentation, to be used as a starter kit that supports other library-based or OER publishing initiatives. Outputs from these phases will include an environmental scan of the state of open peer review, sample MOUs for peer reviewers, guidance for peer reviewers (rubrics and assessment tools to clarify process and expectations), and a final report, including documents and workflows. To achieve these goals and produce these outputs, we will need funding for stipends for pilot peer reviewers and a consultant to assist us with the environmental scan and the final report. OLS and CUNY already support several platforms that we think should serve our technological needs.

The principal investigators for this grant will be University Dean for Libraries and Information Resources Kristin Hart and OER Coordinator Andrew McKinney.

Budget:

<i>Line</i>	<i>Basis</i>	<i>Cost</i>
<i>Peer Reviewers</i>	<i>3 reviewers per title @\$1500 each</i>	<i>\$13,500</i>
<i>Consultant</i>	<i>250 hours/\$60 per hour</i>	<i>\$15,000</i>
Total Budget		\$28,500

