Applicant Organization: Towson University	Amount: $ 25,000
Proposal Title: Building STUDY: An open solution for the use and adoption of university textbooks	
Project Goal: Author a proof-of-concept for an open-source integrated course materials platform	

Describe the problem, need, issue or challenge that your project will address, why your project is innovative, how it could help others or advance knowledge or practice for the field, and its potential to scale as a solution for others.

Towson University is committed to increasing affordability for our students. As a majority-minority university, our students are graduating consistently and on-time across socio-economic boundaries without differences by racial groups. Studies indicate that many students in public universities struggle to afford course books and materials and may even be housing and food insecure. Towson University has made strides to reduce costs; our Faculty Academic Center of Excellence at Towson (FACET) provides grants to faculty to promote wider adoption of open educational resources, selects faculty fellows who lead OER communities of practice, and has implemented free/low-cost course designations in our course catalog. In 2020, Albert S. Cook Library initiated a donor-funded acquisitions program to purchase textbooks—in particular the more highly priced textbooks—for high-enrollment courses. Students are then able to borrow these items from library reserves as an alternative to buying a copy of the textbook. While these FACET and library programs have helped to reduce costs for students, our university-owned bookstore struggles to maintain resources in antiquated systems and gather course materials adoption data from faculty in a timely fashion. Many for-profit publishers sell platforms with Inclusive Access and Equitable Access models, but these platforms often make it difficult, if not impossible, for faculty and students to opt-out and choose low- or no-cost alternatives.

As a university serving our underrepresented communities, many of which are socio-economically challenged, we hope to create a proof-of-concept for an open-source unified platform that will allow all of our parties (the bookstore, FACET, and the library) to load in adopted course materials, whether these are online courseware, e-textbooks or print textbooks for purchase or rental, open educational resources, or materials on reserve in the library. The platform will also include a public interface which will allow students to easily browse for the textbooks they will need for their courses, compare the various options for obtaining them, and then determine their total course materials costs.

This STUDY platform has great potential to scale as a solution for other academic institutions, especially those with strong connections to a campus bookstore with a shared commitment to affordable learning. Our approach is innovative because we intend to build the proof-of-concept for an open-source solution; only for-profit publishers currently offer similar programs, via proprietary platforms. Towson University is also a member of the University System of Maryland Affiliated Institutions (USMAI) Library Consortium, while FACET works frequently with the William E. Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation. These two University System of Maryland affiliates recently received a grant to investigate the role of academic libraries and consortia in OER localization. Our proof-of-concept will be shared with USMAI and the Kirwan Center to consider the possibility of a shared platform and solution across multiple campuses in Maryland.

If the Proposal is a continuation of previously funded work, describe how the previous project met its goals and how the new proposal builds upon earlier work.

This proposal is not a continuation of any previously funded Lyrasis project.

Describe your project plan, including activities, timeframe, resource requirements and, if relevant, collaborators and sustainability plans.

Our activities will include mapping out system requirements and determining what coding language will be most appropriate for a web platform and application (Helman & Fields). We will work with the various

stakeholders (the library, FACET and the bookstore) to determine their needs for a shared system. Additionally, we will hire a graduate student assistant from the TU Department of Computer & Information Sciences to work with Library Information Technology and our Web Developer to map out the system, then develop and code the proof-of-concept. We will have multiple rounds of testing with stakeholders, followed by additional developments. When we have a finalized proof-of-concept, we will share with USMAI, the Kirwan Center and other Maryland libraries to gauge interest and potential. There are multiple avenues for additional funding to actively build out the software, including IMLS, the Department of Education, private foundations and funders, etc., which we will actively pursue once a proof-of-concept exists.

Projects involving OSS must briefly address sustainability, including governance, resources, community engagement, and technology as described in the ITAV framework at
https://www.lyrasis.org/programs/Pages/IMLS-OSS.aspx

This project only involves Phase 1 with establishing Governance and Phase 2 Technology for a proof-of-concept creation. Our hope will be that after the Catalyst Fund project concludes, we will apply for funding with our consortia and other development partners where we could spin up open-source software for a community with various members engaged in roles similar to the Islandora project of partner, collaborator, or member.

Provide names and titles for the principal investigator(s) and other key participants in the project.

Bill Helman, Head of Library Information Technology
Krystin Fields, Web Designer
Rick Davis, Copyright Librarian & Head of Resource Sharing
Joyce Garczynski, Assistant University Librarian for Communication & Digital Scholarship
Trish Westerman, Assistant Vice Provost, Faculty Academic Center of Excellence
Stacy Elofir, University Store Director

Budget. *Add/remove and complete rows as needed in the table below.*

Line	Basis	Cost
Hire Graduate Student Assistant in Computer Science	Student to code a proof-of-concept for this platform. The cost includes the stipend that the graduate student receives as well as their tuition waiver for the year. The first term the student would receive 50% of tuition waived and work up to 10 hours weekly; the second term the student would receive 100% of tuition waived and work up to 20 hours weekly.	$13,251
Graduate Student Assistant Tuition Waiver	Tuition waivers for two semesters	$9,472
Server costs	Cost of spinning up a local server from campus IT for development.	$2,277
Total Budget Request		$25,000