The UNESCO recommendation of “encouraging effective, inclusive and equitable access to quality OER” signals an evolution of the OER movement to more explicitly and conscientiously consider both epistemic and representational justice (Hodgkinson Williams and Trotter, 2018; Lambert, 2018). The broader movement towards open education, including open educational resources (OER), open educational practice (OEP), open-source, and open access, has provided us with new ways of designing learning experiences in higher education, but at the same time has been mapped onto many of our existing legacy artefacts and systems, such as textbooks, design processes, and traditional course publishing models. As learning design professionals and faculty strive to adopt OEP, including more collaborative and open ways of sharing, there is recognition that many of the traditional tools and spaces that shape our educational systems will not meet these pedagogical and epistemological shifts. One example of a traditional resource which has had a prominent focus in the discourses around open educational practices is the textbook. While recognizing the considerable impact that open textbooks have had on textbook affordability, there is a need to explore how openness may also afford new modes and approaches to teaching and learning, and address epistemic and representational injustices (Lambert, 2018; Hodgkinson-Williams & Trotter, 2018). Participatory and open platforms for digital resource development provide some opportunity to move beyond the hierarchical and linear ordering of content, but many of these platforms still represent western epistemologies and knowledge sharing traditions. For example, Funk and Guthadjaka (2020) argue that most digital platforms are not designed to accommodate Indigenous knowledge ownership, in that information is framed as “content” and put in “discrete digital containers” (p. 1) which conflicts with cultural practices where knowledge is embedded within ancestral and relational contexts. The traditional textbook form can lack the interactivity, agency, and accessibility needed to enable spaces that honor multiple voices and perspectives, co-create knowledge and challenge traditional roles and hierarchies supported in open pedagogical approaches. If open education is framed solely as the adoption and use of OER or open textbooks, we miss an opportunity to consider how openness may also afford new modes and approaches to teaching and critical approaches to learning design. As part of this project the concept of an untraditional textbook or resource, termed the “untextbook” is considered and a model is under development.

For this project, we have adopted a critical lens to investigate educators’ understanding of both traditional and alternative textbook forms, and examine how critical instructional design and open pedagogy may call for a rethinking of these forms. In this first phase, and within the context of open education practices (OEP) including open textbooks, we conducted workshops that involved faculty, instructional designers, educational developers, and academic administrators during three conferences in 2019: OER19 Conference held in Galway, Ireland; the Cascadia Open Education Summit held in Vancouver, British Columbia; and the Educational Technology Users Group held in Kamloops, British Columbia. Based on data collected during these three interactive workshops, and combined with personal reflections from the project instigators, we have considered emerging issues and tensions in the use of textbooks as pedagogical agents/artefacts in teaching and learning, and their relation to OEP. Specifically, we have considered what aspects of the textbook may be rethought in the context of open pedagogies and practices as increasingly ubiquitous access to knowledge and open licensing of content and data become more widely available.

A major focus for the second phase of this research will be to gather practitioners/researchers and students to help refine the untextbook model. Completing the last two phases of this project will provide resources and readings to help inform practice, and will provide both a resource and a collaborative process which examines and develops new models for design. In addition, it will provide a model for an “untextbook” that aims to include multiple perspectives and participatory architectures that allow for diverse voices and knowledge co-creation. A prototype platform is under
development that is focused on inviting/honoring multiple voices and decentering and co-constructing knowledge. In this interactive workshop we invite participants to become active contributors to this open platform and resource development, by engaging with the current platform/resource, contributing voices/ideas and providing feedback on the experience and model in an active discussion activity.

References

