REQUIREMENTS FOR E-TEXTBOOKS CREATED IN SPECIAL SUBJECTS

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A **digital textbook** is a digital book or e-book intended to serve as the text for a class. Digital textbooks may also be known as **e-textbooks** or **e-texts**. Digital textbooks are a major component of technology-based education reform. They may serve as the texts for a traditional face-to-face class, an online course or degree, or massive open online courses (MOOCs).

As with physical textbooks, digital textbooks can be either rented for a term or purchased for lifetime access. While accessible, digital textbooks can be downloaded, printed, or accessed online via a compatible device. To access content online, users must often use a 3rd party hosting provider or "digital bookshelf" through which digital textbooks can be served. There are many potential advantages to digital textbooks. They may offer lower costs, make it easier to monitor student progress, and are easier and cheaper to update when needed. Open source e-textbooks may offer the opportunity to create free, modifiable textbooks for basic subjects, or give individual teachers the opportunity to create e-texts for their own classrooms. They may offer better access to quality texts in the developing world. For this reason, many schools and colleges around the world have made the implementation of digital textbooks a central component of education policy. For example, in South Korea, reading materials in all public schools will be digitized by 2015. In the United States, the Federal Communications Commission aims for every student to be able to access e-texts by 2017.

However, the transition to e-textbooks is costly, complex and controversial. Students express a strong preference for printed materials in many surveys and across cultures. Many interconnected factors, from device access, to digital

literacy, to teaching methods affect the implementation of digital textbooks in the classroom. Issues of overall value, book quality, privacy, and intellectual property have yet to be resolved. An early 2009 study by Cleantech Group LLC also found that the emissions used to create an eBook were equivalent to 22.5 physical books, representing a significant improvement in environmental sustainability. As of 2021, the largest supplier of digital textbooks is VitalSource, with over 1 million titles in its catalog.

Because digital textbooks must be accessed through an electronic device, such as a laptop or e-reader, schools and colleges must determine how to provide access to all students. Many school districts are now offering "one-to-one" technology programs, in which a tablet or laptop is issued to each student. This ensures that all of the devices meet the same requirements (such as memory or software) and that all the devices can be networked, monitored and upgraded together. However, the one-to-one model also imposes significant costs on school districts, and brings up issues of privacy and personal use.

An alternative to one-to-one is to ask students to use their own electronic devices in class. This is called Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) or, sometimes, Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT). BYOD allows students to choose their preferred device for studying. Compared to one-to-one, it decreases the technology and maintenance costs for institutions. But not all students' devices may be compatible with the digital textbooks required for a class, and the devices may not be able to network with each other. A BYOD approach may also count out students who cannot afford a computer, e-reader or smartphone.

The concepts of open access and open source support the idea of open textbooks, digital textbooks that are free (gratis) and easy to distribute, modify and update (libre). Schools, teachers or professors may design their own open textbooks by gathering open access scholarly articles or other open access resources into one text or one curriculum. Open textbooks offer affordable access, especially to basic and common information, and pose a challenge to traditional

models of textbook publishing. Modifiable or community edited textbooks may also be difficult to establish as credible or scholarly sources.

Other models for digital textbook publishing are more traditional. Textbook publishers may offer digital textbooks or digital curriculums that are standardized across classrooms, easier to update, and compliant with national standards, teaching methods or goals. This approach also offers pitfalls. License or renewal fees for digital textbooks may impose unexpected costs for institutions. For example, in 2013, the LA Unified School District announced that it would face an additional $60 million to license the curriculum for its one-to-one iPad program.

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