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Book Review: Open: The Philosophy and Practices that are Revolutionizing Education and Science

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Book Review

Open: The Philosophy and Practices that are Revolutionizing Education and Science

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BOOK REVIEW

Open: The Philosophy and Practices that are Revolutionizing Education and Science

Edited by Rajiv S. Jhangiani & Robert Biswas-Diener

2017 | Ubiquity Press: London | 294 pages | ISBN-13: 978-1-911529-01-9 | Free (Open Access)

In *Open: The Philosophy and Practices that are Revolutionizing Education and Science*—a volume of edited essays—the editors Robert Biswas-Diener and Rajiv Jhangiani, situate the “open movement” and its many facets within the framework of education, primarily higher education. In their introduction, the editors posit that openness and its associations with education, librarianship, and science suggests an important social justice imperative to support the world’s poor and underserved. Throughout this volume, short essays attest to, and present examples for, the critical and philosophical landscape that structures, benefits, and challenges the open movement. Overall, the editors deliver on what they have set out to do—namely, to offer a book that addresses open practices and resources, to compile a body of work that provides a contextual overture to the social justice imperatives underlying the open movement, and to create takeaway tools to be used by researchers, instructors, librarians, students, and policymakers alike.

What I find exceptional about this volume is its breadth; this 25-chapter collection undertakes to deepen and to connect conversations about “open” and the open movement writ-large. This work is international in its authorship and scope, and it represents an array of voices from 37 universities and research institutions across Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and other countries. Contributors to this volume are global leaders in the open movement. It is important to note that the editors have identified one of the limitations of this work to be that about half of the chapters are authored by psychologists. This, I think, is understated. Many chapters demonstrate a significant disciplinary slant towards psychology—especially Huitt and Monetti’s, “Openness and the Transformation of Education and Schooling,” which the editors reinforce as “a more sophisticated discussion of the ways that openness is transforming education.” Although this could be read as collegial and congratulatory, the editors lean too forcefully



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into their own disciplinary biases in such a way that grants primacy to a certain mode of scholarship.

Contributing authors to this collection introduce insightful arguments and open new avenues for discourse that have both theoretical takeaways and practical applications. Chapters address topics such as Open Education and Open Educational Resources, Open Science and Data, Librarianship and Openness, Open Pedagogy. For example, Wayne Mackintosh's chapter, "Open Course Development at the OERu," may be particularly useful to those interested in the theoretical underpinnings of open design and practices. Meanwhile, the editors have devoted a robust section to case studies that guide educators toward stronger practices for sharing, creating, and disseminating Open Educational Resources. Mary Burgess' chapter, "The BC Open Textbook Project," describes the development of a repository that houses more than 150 open textbooks and how that repository has made resources available across British Columbia. Over the span of the collection, these arguments and practices work synergistically and demonstrate the pervasiveness and the importance of open across professional and disciplinary divides.

While educators and those involved in pedagogy at the post-secondary level are the primary target audience for this collection, undergraduate and graduate students, as well as those interested in making open-related policy decisions, will find valuable information therein; University or college administrators may want to read Farhad Dastur's, "How to Open an Academic Department," which highlights potential processes and problems in the administrative life of academic departments as they explore open options. Librarians may want to give their attention to Quill West's chapter, "Librarians in the Pursuit of Open Practices," or Anita Walz's, "A Library Viewpoint: Exploring Open Educational Practices." Any collection will have gaps in its treatment of a subject, and, as the work is global in scope and by virtue of its diverse authorship, the editors could have strengthened it by devoting a section to regional considerations for open applications and practices; too many of the chapters found within focus on practicable applications of open within the northern hemisphere—particularly the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. As I mentioned above, the strength of this collection is its topical breadth and its focus on practical applications for open in educational environments, and insofar as the collection appears to offer introductions to many of its related topics, this will not necessarily be useful to researchers interested in deep-dives into any one topic—unless that topic is the interdependencies and complications within the open movement.

Open is itself an example of open practices and is made freely available as an open book through Ubiquity Press. This collection is available in paperback, PDF, EPUB, and Mobi (Kindle) formats, and it is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 Inter-

national License. I engaged with the text as a fixed layout EPUB through Ubiquity Press's browser application and as a reflowable EPUB in Adobe Digital Editions; neither platform significantly changed my reading experience. This work can be accessed for free online by visiting: <https://doi.org/10.5334/bbc>

BIOGRAPHY

Sam Simas is the Digital Services and Research Librarian at Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island. He earned his MLIS, as well as his MA in English Literature, from the University of Rhode Island. His research focuses on scholarly communications and digital scholarship.

