

SIMRA NEWS



State Instructional Materials Review Association

Spring/Summer 2016

SIMRA to Meet in Maryland

State Instructional Materials Review Association (SIMRA) members will join State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) members for the annual SETDA Leadership Summit in October. SIMRA will also meet independently during the conference for specific association work.

Conference Information

October 16-19, 2016
Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center 291 Waterfront Street, National Harbor, MD

Register here: <http://leadershipsummit.setda.org/#!/overview>

“Education without vetted curriculum carefully aligned to standards is directionless and irrelevant.”

Alan Griffin, Utah State Textbook Coordinator



SIMRA members attend a meeting in Utah, 2014

In This Issue

- What is SIMRA?
- 2016 State Reports
- Open Education Resources & the Land of the Free (Guest Editorial)
- 2016 SIMRA Officers

What is SIMRA?

SIMRA, the State Instructional Materials Review Association is dedicated to the process of thorough and ongoing review of instructional materials that assures alignment of **content** to core standards, **accessibility** for use by all students, and promotes quality **pedagogy** as determined by established criteria. Members of the Association collaborate and **share resources** frequently to continually improve the review process and provide for fair and **systematic reviews of materials**. The organization has a long history of maintaining high standards and specifications for the manufacturing and distribution of quality instructional materials. SIMRA vets instructional materials to:

- Insure that **content is aligned** to core standards and objectives that lead to college and career readiness and is structured to ensure that all students meet grade-specific expectations as they develop literacy skills.
- Promote **universally accessible** instructional resources, guaranteeing that materials are free from bias in their portrayal of ethnic groups, gender, age, disabilities, cultures, religion, etc., and contain accommodations for students with multiple learning styles, exceptionalities, and language and cultural differences. Resources should be durable and of high quality in physical structure, and designed to promote optimal learning experiences for all students.
- Encourage **Pedagogical Design** so that materials provide tools for a balanced approach to assessment including both formative and summative assessments in multiple formats, not only to guide instruction but also to identify student mastery of content. Information is organized logically and presented clearly using multiple methods and modes for delivering instruction that motivates and increases literacy as students engage in high interest, authentic activities. Instruction is designed to utilize research-based instructional strategies, offer suggestions for appropriate scaffolding, emphasize the importance of vocabulary acquisition, and provide opportunities to engage in high interest, age-appropriate activities that mirror real-life situations, and make cross-curricular, global connections.

2016 State Reports

Visit the SIMRA website to find individual state contacts and for current information about textbook adoptions, or click the image to the right to access.

<http://simra.us>



Meet the 2016 SIMRA Officers

President

Alan Griffin

Utah

Vice-President

Randall Lee

Georgia

Treasurer

Marcie Buckle

Louisiana

Secretary

Elizabeth Flasnick

Idaho

ACTS SIMRA Delegation

Randall Lee

Cliff Rudnick

Alan Griffin

Guest Editorial Comment: Open Education Resources and the Land of the Free

By Alan Griffin

There is nothing more endearing to Americans than their freedom. They will argue, fight, and die for freedom. In the patriotic sense, it has been well noted, however, that freedom isn't free. With it there is great responsibility. None the less, we love freedom and there is something magical about the root word "free."

Nothing draws department store crowds like an announcement of a free gift to be given away in the furniture department. Even free hot dogs will draw a luncheon crowd. Economists live by TANSTAAFL, or the doctrine of "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch." They are quick to point out that there is a cost to everything. It's often just a matter of determining who pays for it. Often, "free" just means that the cost is distributed and shouldered by taxpayers and citizens, e.g. free concerts in the park, or community events.

Enter the age of Open Education Resources (OERs) and the widespread notion that they are "free curriculum." Highly touted as a way to reduce the cost of commercially produced textbooks and instructional materials, they are rapidly spreading into classrooms across the nation. They are available on education state repositories online and are linked from a variety of lesson plans and teaching resources. Most bear the Creative Commons "ccby" license, making them adaptable for teacher and student use.

Open educational resources (**OER**) are freely accessible, openly licensed documents and media that are useful for teaching, learning, and assessing as well as for research purposes. -Wikipedia

So, by definition, OERs are "freely accessible," meaning that anyone can get them for no cost. They must certainly avoid the current marketing strategy of producing a free resource that then soliciting additional fees for subscription or upgrades. Otherwise "free" is just a ploy to attract customers.

Most Open Education Resources being created currently are produced in digital format. They are freely accessible only as the associated hardware permits. It is a significant burden for publishers to provide materials that work on all available electronic devices. Public education's mandate to provide equitable education for all students requires universal access. The move away from print has not yet clearly demonstrated a cost savings in its use of updated, easily accessible and supportable technology.

Certainly there are costs associated with the development and production of OER materials. It's not real likely that individuals or organizations just donate their time, effort and personal resources because of deep devotion to altruistic motives. Even if they did, the opportunity costs of time spent elsewhere erases the "free" aspect of the resources. The real question then, is who shoulders the cost of the creation of these materials? If a government entity sponsors the work, then it is tax payers that bear this burden. If one or more corporate organizations provide funding, then surely the work will in some way place them in a favorable light that increases the popularity and marketability of their product or service.

American capitalism allows for this, and encourages some altruism in the production of resources that are freely available, even if they are in limited quantities or if they lead to eventual "paid for" products and services. All of us have benefitted from these freely offered items. The internet has been a breeding ground for them. It

(Continued on page 4)

Freedom keep walkin'
Keep on your toes and
Don't stop talkin' 'bout
Freedom get goin'
Lots to be learned
And lots to be knowin' 'bout

People gotta reach 'em
Sit 'em right down
And then you gotta teach 'em 'bout
Freedom gotta win it
Gotta put yourself smack dab in it

Hey tomorrow
Now don't you go away
'Cause freedom
Just might come your way

--"Mother Freedom" by David Gates

(Continued from page 3)

has also bred a generation of wary consumers, who carefully use the product to the extent of its free access, and who must understand and responsibly participate in features that must be paid for.

Perhaps it would be well to ask the creators of OER materials to clearly identify at the outset what the limits of free access are, or to indicate at what point use of the items will require a charge. Additionally, it should be made clear what hardware requirements there are. At the very least it is important to know who is providing a resource, why they are offering it at no cost to the consumer, and what technical requirements are required to utilize it. Then we can use the resource with a clear understanding of its origin, purpose, and true cost. Eliminating the profit motive of creators, and emphasizing open access and distribution may significantly reduce costs, but clearly, even with Open Education Resources, there really “ain’t no such thing as a free lunch.”

- Alan Griffin, 2016

 **SIMRA has a Facebook Page!**
Look for “State Instructional Materials Review Association—SIMRA” and “Like” the page!

 **SIMRA has a Twitter Hashtag!**
Add #SIMRAGroup to your instructional materials and SIMRA-related Tweets so that Tweets about SIMRA can be easily found.



SIMRA State Contacts

Alabama: [Martin Dukes](#)

Arkansas: [Thomas Coy](#)

California: [Cliff Rudnick](#), [Stephanie Gregson](#),
[Kristen Cruz-Allen](#), [David Almquist](#)

Florida: [Katrina Figgett](#), [Genevieve English-Charles](#)

Georgia: [Randall Lee](#)

Idaho: [Scott Cook](#), [Elizabeth Flasnick](#)

Indiana: [Mark Broderick](#), [Joshua Towns](#)

Kentucky: [Kathy Mansfield](#)

Louisiana: [Jackie Bobbett](#), [Marcie Buckle](#),
[Brenda Neff](#)

Mississippi: [Lakisha Kendrick](#)

Nevada: [Andre Deleon](#)

New Jersey: [Susan Sullivan](#)

New Mexico: [Anthony Burns](#)

North Carolina: [Tiffany Perkins](#), [Carmella Fair](#)

Oklahoma: [Timmie Spangler](#)

Oregon: [Vanessa Clark](#), [Mark Freed](#)

South Carolina: [Clare F. Luther](#), [Kriss Stewart](#)

Tennessee: [Alison Gower](#)

Texas: [Kelly Calloway](#)

Utah: [Alan Griffin](#)

Virginia: [Christonya Brown](#)

West Virginia: [Rebecca Butler](#)