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[Wikipedia Founder Proposes Support for Open Textbooks](#)

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Wikipedia co-founder Larry Sanger put out an appeal last week in the [*Journal of Higher Education*](#) to donate money to create textbooks online that would be free to children in grades K-12 worldwide. While that is a great idea, the appeal should be reworded to say "support existing efforts to create open educational materials for students worldwide."

A large open education movement already exists primarily supported by the [Hewlett Foundation](#) in Menlo Park, CA. Of course, Hewlett Foundation could use more support in terms of dollars and volunteers since this a global movement, but the movement does not need another group doing the same thing.

One area where Open Educational Resources (OER) needs support is *search*; the movement needs to find a way to find these OER materials on the web. At the moment they are very hard to locate. Even people working in the same field don't know about other people working in the field. Since I work as a consultant in the OER field, every day I hear about a new site or a new group duplicating the efforts of already existing groups

Here are some of the important websites in the OER field and I would bet that most people reading this blog never heard of these websites, but if you have kids, you and your kids might find it helpful to learn about these websites.

One of the richest repositories of OER for grades K-12 can be found at www.oercommons.org founded by Dr. Lisa Petrides in Half Moon Bay, California. Other groups targeting the K12 area include [Currki](#); [Hotchalk](#), and the well-known elementary book site [Scholastic](#). Home schoolers should learn about all of these sites. Other excellent resources at the college level include [MIT Open Courseware](#), [UC Berkeley Open Courses](#) and [Yale University Open Courses](#).

In fact, there are hundreds of universities that are planning to put their courses online in the next few years and many that already do. [Open Courseware Consortium](#) lists all the universities with online courses. Here is a [video](#) about them. [Monterey Institute for Technology and Education](#) has wonderful courses available to high school students and Rice University has a great site called [Connexions](#).

At the preschool level, the [Joan Ganz Cooney Center](#) founded by [Joan Ganz Cooney](#), one of the founders of *Sesame Street*, is working to make preschool and early education materials available on the web. In Europe, the [EuropeanSchoolNet](#) is providing a gateway to educational resources for all the European countries that can be used worldwide. In China, there is [CORE](#), which is

open education in Chinese and English. Perhaps, the earliest group in this field of OER is [Merlot](#) that has about 60,000 members and a website that is well organized and easy to use. However, finding it can be a challenge. Searches for Merlot usually bring up wine, not education.

At Stanford University, Neeru Khosla, wife of [Vinod Khosla](#), one of the founders of Sun Microsystems, has an online group called [CK12](#) dedicated to providing low-cost or free textbooks to students worldwide. It is a great idea and she has excellent tools, but one of the issues in the U.S. is control of educational materials by school boards. Most school boards are reluctant to change and teachers are in no position to grab unapproved textbooks from the web to use in their classrooms. So this is another major issue that needs to be resolved.

[Creative Commons](#), a group devoted to expanding the range of creative works available for others to legally build upon and share, created a sub-group last year called ccLearn. [ccLearn](#) is trying to solve search problem by using [Google Custom Search Engine](#) to facilitate searching for Open Educational Resources (OER). This project is underway, but there are so many materials out there that it might need more than a Custom Search Engine.

This movement needs more cooperation between all the amazing people each trying to help the world's children. It also needs a better way to index or locate OER materials by subject, grade level, language, and licensing (open or protected) so that OER can really make a difference to teachers and children all over the world