Using Pressbooks During Covid-19 and Beyond

Using Pressbooks During Covid-19 and Beyond

ERIKA RYDBERG-HALL



Using Pressbooks During Covid-19 and Beyond Copyright © 2025 by Erika Rydberg-Hall is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, except where otherwise noted.

Contents

Introduction – Why Pressbooks? 1

Main Body

Resources for the New Pressbooks User 3
Considerations for Building Your Pressbook 5
Introductory Videos on the Pressbooks System 7
9

Acknowledgements 11

Introduction – Why Pressbooks?

Pressbooks is a wonderful tool to build published or in-the-works materials that can be shared. Pressbooks is based on the WordPress platform and allows you to build a user-friendly and adaptable web book. Also, anyone can easily export the materials in files such as .epub, or .pdf. In times like these, which for most of us are unprecedented, it can be challenging to consider how to re-think a course or how to do things differently. This is not just a challenge, but a great opportunity to re-evaluate and test the methods, tools, and the meaning behind your pedagogy. In the 5 years since the Covid-19 pandemic, I believe it is still urgent to think about flexibility in your curriculum in a time of continued challenges (political, climate, and otherwise).

Open systems, such as OER (open educational resources) can also help students persist through courses and their academic life. During the Covid 19 pandemic, it was even more important to explore how to make courses more adaptable, affordable, and accessible. We can and should also consider thinking about compassion, care, and kindness. I think Pressbooks and OER, in general, can help us expand our compassion, care, and kindness in unexpected ways. OER lowers the cost of education for our students, can involve them in collaborative processes, and help us learn and help us express our own humanity and perspectives, I wrote this during Covid, but I believe it still pertains to our times now. Provided below are my favorite guides for Pressbooks and open publishing, and I'm going to bring you through a tour of some materials that faculty have built here at Plymouth State University.

But first, a few quotes from Plymouth State University users of Pressbooks.

> "I used Pressbooks because I wanted a professional publication platform that was easy to use and would allow open access. I received great advice from Cathie LeBlanc who used Pressbooks."

> "It is fantastic that PSU is developing Pressbooks as a tool for instruction and student publishing. We need a platform like this to promote learning, showcase student work, and connect with our communities."

In the next section, you'll find a list of resources, and following that in the final section of this Pressbook, I will include ideas for building out your Pressbook and a video tour through some Pressbooks I really appreciate that were and continue to be built here at Plymouth State University and the University System of New Hampshire (of which Plymouth State University is a part!).

Resources for the New Pressbooks User

The Beginner User: Tools to Learn

I have found the Pressbooks User Guide essential to my understanding of the ins and outs of the technology side of Pressbooks and for learning how to use the tool well. The Pressbooks User Guide notably has a wonderful brief section on Making Your Book Accessible and Inclusive. The Pressbooks User Guide is full of the basic knowledge you need to be able to start using Pressbooks. I encourage all those new to the system to take the time and go through the guide.

Pressbooks User Guide

This is another guide I've come across, an updated version from University of Manitoba Libraries in 2024.
Using Pressbooks: A Reference for OER Creators

A great guide on Low Bandwidth Teaching and Learning – for optimizing technology files.

OER in the Classroom

Thinking more about how to create and integrate materials for the class and beyond, the Rebus Community I've found to have some of the best materials to read through. Rebus Community is an initiative of the Rebus Foundation, a Canadian registered charity and they support a model of publishing that is collaborative, efficient, and open. [1] Rebus Community has powerful resources on Making Open Textbooks with Students and The Rebus Guide to Publishing Open Textbooks (So Far)

Example Texts to Explore

These are a few resources I've found after researching many Pressbooks sites and materials that I like to share as aspirational Pressbooks that university members could look to in terms of different ways to build and develop their Pressbooks. I see these again as aspirational and valuable resources to help you consider how you might use Pressbooks.

The Word on College Reading and Writing

This is an introductory collegiate material.

The Essentials of Linguistics

This is a subject Material written by an expert.

Driving Educational Change: Innovations in Action

This is a collaboration between students and faculty.

1. https://about.rebus.community

Pressbooks Directory

In the winter of 2020 – Pressbooks also launched a new resource that is extremely valuable for searching Pressbooks materials. The URL is simply: pressbooks.directory . We here at Plymouth launched our cataloged materials in 2021 onto Pressbooks Directory. You can also read more about Using the Pressbooks Directory.

Pressbooks also wrote an interesting blog post about their launch of the directory.

Plymouth State University – University System of New Hampshire

We were out front in the use of Plymouth State's Pressbooks, and whilst our independent account has retired. This material is now hosted on the University System of New Hampshire's (USNH) Pressbooks Site, where you can find some of the materials that were in our original Plymouth State Catalog.

Our Catalog is a public place, where you can find materials that our community members have published. It's a good place to start idea gathering and to find our other Plymouth State University community members who have used Pressbooks. You could inquire and ask about questions to them or some of the other experts we have in the Pressbooks world on our campus.

Course Textbook

Creating Games by Cathie LeBlanc

> I wanted to create a textbook to support my face-to-face class while his material is intended to be an entire online course. That said, I will make the materials that I use in my course freely available as I develop it.[2]

Classroom Assignment and Collaborative Book

Opening Contemporary Art by Sarah Parrish

2. https://pressbooks.usnh.edu/creatinggames/front-matter/introduction/

Considerations for Building Your Pressbook

When thinking about building your Pressbook there will be several things to consider, we're open to the use and creation of the material. Below is a list of considerations and questions to ask when building your Pressbook.

Creation

Who is creating and/or leading the creation of the material? What perspectives do they bring to the material?

Do you expect this Pressbook to continue to evolve and grow, or see it more as a static material, or even something that might change from time to time, maybe not often. Perhaps you're considering making new editions down the road of the material and this one will be your starting material, a guide of sorts for future endeavors.

Do you want to involve students? What might their roles be? When is your book finished?

Audience

Who is the audience for the material? Defining the audience can be a simple task or something more complex. As small an audience as your class is perfectly fine, or as large as the internet itself, or other people within the discipline you practice. Think about whom might be engaging with the material or whom you might want the audience to be. This will influence, the build, the sharing structure, and the creation itself. Remember to think about the audience within the context of "Open Pedagogy" as well – this material exists beyond the walls of the Learning Management System and that is an important consideration to make.

Community

Who else in the community might be engaged in or participate in the creation of the material or might the material provide value to?

Structure

Pressbooks allows for the integration of digital resources into your material. How might images, audio, video, or interactivity be used in your material, or will they not be? Why or why not? How will you structure your material?

Creativity

What might make this material or interacting with this material be different than other modes currently engaged with during our current time? Reflecting on Covid, or maybe even a snow day, you could also perhaps reflect on thinking about teaching during an emergency (or non emergency) remote learning situation and the technology or materials you

used i.e. Zoom or your video conferencing tool, your Learning Management System, a website? What might make your material exciting? What excites **you** in the creation of a new material?

Introductory Videos on the Pressbooks System

Welcome to the next section in your Pressbooks education. I've created some introductory video materials for you to explore your Pressbooks. If you have questions, remember just like Pressbooks is a living and active resource so I hope you take advantage of opportunities to ask questions and learn more.

Pressbooks Introduction

This video introduces you to our Pressbooks site.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.usnh.edu/using-pressbooks/?p=23

Organizing Your Pressbook Parts

This video will walk you through setting up your Pressbook parts i.e. your Front Matter, Chapters, and Back Matter.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.usnh.edu/using-pressbooks/?p=23

Navigating Book Info

This video will give you an introduction to the Book Info section on Pressbooks and some things you will want to add or change in your new Pressbook.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.usnh.edu/using-pressbooks/?p=23

Pressbooks Remainder of Settings

This video will go through the remaining important settings in your Pressbook.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.usnh.edu/using-pressbooks/?p=23

Exploring Pressbooks Catalogs Opportunities

This video gives a brief overview of Pressbooks Catalogs and where to find inspiration through what other faculty and community members of USNH have built.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://pressbooks.usnh.edu/using-pressbooks/?p=23

Example Text [1]

1. https://www.google.com

Acknowledgements

I want to thank all of the advocates for Pressbooks on campus and faculty members who have used the system and continue to build on it. I love what Pressbooks has to offer and I hope you will consider investigating and using it as a tool in your in-person, blended, or digital classroom. I encourage you to explore these resources and beyond.