

Inclusive Learning through OER: Beyond Cost Savings

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Introduction

Rutgers University Libraries will launch our tenth round of competitive Open and Affordable Textbook (OAT) awards in 2026. In addition to saving our students more than \$13M, we have noted additional benefits for students. All examples are taken from actual OAT applications submitted by course instructors or open textbook authors. Some quotes have been lightly edited or condensed for clarity.

Integrate culturally relevant content

Subject: History

These courses are meant to cover a geographic area (nearly all the Western Hemisphere) and time frame (more than 500 years) that is impossible to represent comprehensively. Nonetheless, many students come to these classes with a vested interest in specific places in Latin America and the Caribbean. They wish to learn about where they or their ancestors came from. Therefore, one aim of mine is to provide resources and curricula for students to independently examine diverse geographic histories that cannot be covered in the class as a whole.

Incorporate current events

Subject: Psychology

There are older versions of the text I would like to use available through the library, but given the massive changes to the field of medicine over the last decade, using current journal articles is the best way to give students a course that reflects the rapidly changing healthcare landscape.

Reflect diverse levels of preparation

Subject: World Languages (German)

One type of diversity that is often an issue in German courses is students' background with the language: some may have completed the minimum coursework to qualify for this level; others may have grown up with German-speaking relatives or spent years in Germany while a parent was working there or serving in the military.

Reflect diverse student backgrounds

Subject: Health Sciences

All visual and supplemental content, including photos and videos, will reflect the diversity of the population we aim to serve across

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Ability
- Socioeconomic status

ensuring that our materials are relatable and inclusive of various lived experiences of healthcare providers and their patients.

Reflect diverse learning styles

Subject: Latinx Studies

In the digital environment, these materials become more accessible to differently abled people. When a reader or audiobook is available, the literature becomes more accessible to language learners who can slow down or increase the velocity of the reading to maximize comprehension.

Increase student engagement

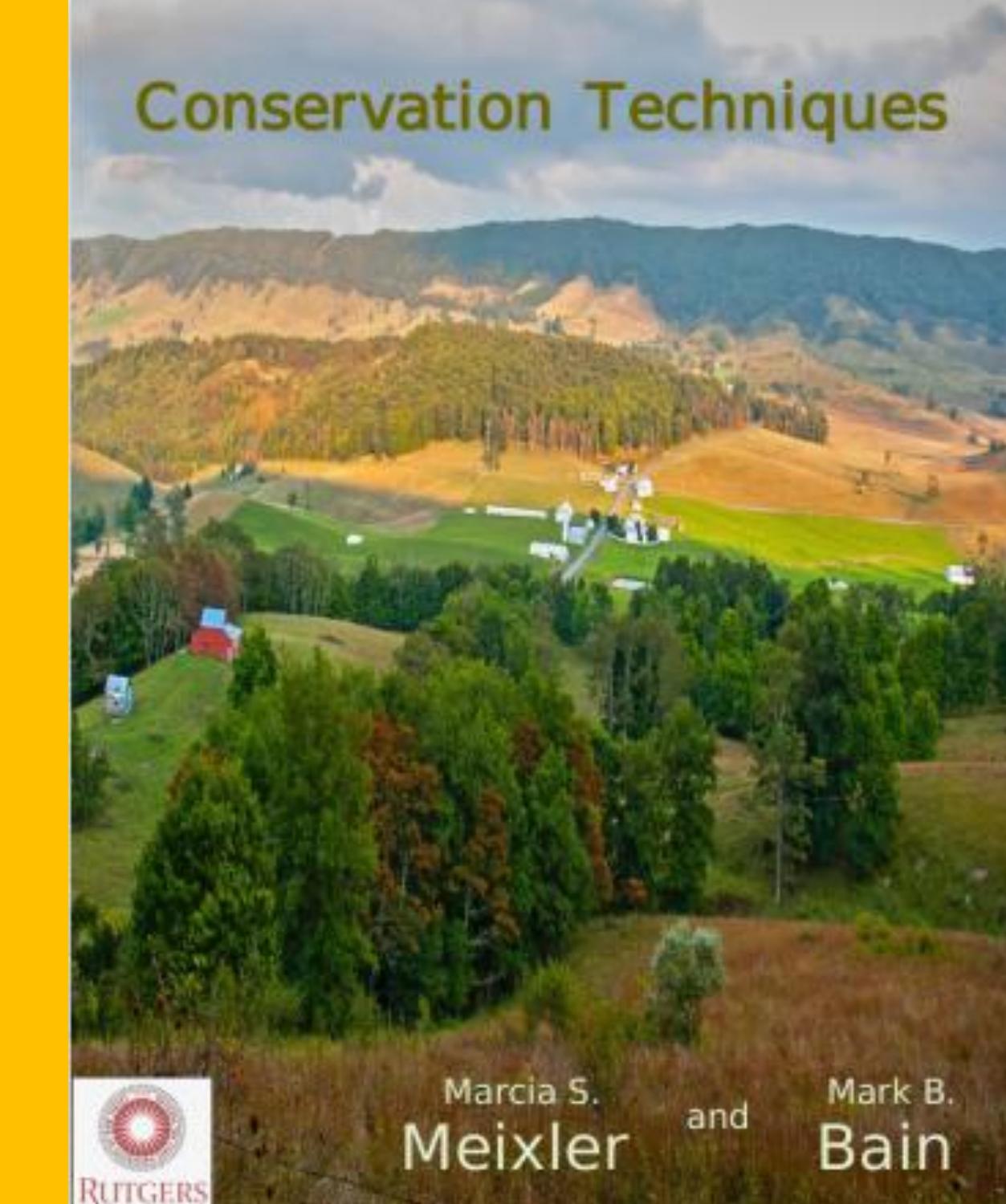
Subject: Religion

Rather than be given instructor-assigned readings on course topics, students prefer to be assigned open-ended topics or questions and to find materials of their choosing with which to address the topics/answer the questions. Rather than requiring particular readings, the course will give students a range of possible sources they can use and allow them to find their own sources by working in consultation with me and/or the university library.

Add new perspectives, topics, and voices

Subject: Educational Psychology

Case studies and curriculum guides from UNESCO and the National Association for Gifted Children will be integrated to highlight diverse contributions and challenges in gifted education.



Cover, *Conservation Techniques* by Marcia S. Meixler and Mark B. Bain

Incorporate emerging research

Subject: Social Work

Given the increasing demand for data-driven solutions in social justice and public health, it is imperative that students have access to high-quality, relevant, and freely available learning resources that emphasize applied, community-centered research.

Support lifelong learning

Subject: Nursing

The open textbook will remain available to students beyond graduation for future reference, particularly as the need to review concepts takes on new meaning during the APN's evolving practice. Students lose the ability to access rented textbooks later in their career, at a time when reviewing those concepts may be critically important.