



Algebra Essentials: Author Interview

Transcript

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Narrator: Algebra Essentials. Author Interview.

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Narrator: Introduction.

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Iain: I've been an open learning faculty member, Thompson Rivers University since 2010. And I teach, develop course materials in the area of mathematics and statistics.

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Iain: One of my courses is precalculus so I developed this

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Iain: OER to, help students in that course.

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Narrator: How did the idea for this open educational resource come to life?

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Iain: There was kind of two motivating factors for this. One was, back in spring 2024, I attended a presentation given by Open Press at the, Open Learning Workshop, and I was kind of super excited and, interested in the kinds of projects that, you were involved with. And so I thought, well, maybe, maybe I could do one, too.

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Iain: And so thinking about my pre-calculus course. So that was a fairly new course for me.

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Iain: so I was finding that many of the students in that course were was just struggling to get going. And,

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Iain: what seemed to be, a major barrier for them was just,

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Iain: essential algebra skills that they were struggling with.

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Iain: And this was becoming a barrier for them just moving through the course. And so I thought, well, maybe if I can put together some, some videos and some practice exercises to help these students give them kind of a little bit of support just to get going, and then hopefully they would be more successful in the course.

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Narrator: What inspired or influenced the development of this OER?

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Iain: I've

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Iain: been with Open Learning since 2010 and ever since I started, as an open Learning faculty member, I've found that,

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Iain: students respond well to, short videos of different topics and working through problems.

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Iain: And so in all the courses that I have and all the course development I've done with Open Learning, I've developed lots of instructional videos.

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Iain: And so that was,

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Iain: the main idea that I wanted to incorporate into this work. And then the other idea that I wanted to incorporate was,

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Iain: to have practice exercises that the students could work through by themselves.

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Iain: And I had some experience with, H5P technology and so I wanted to use that to create practice exercises to accompany all the videos.

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Iain: And so the idea was that students would be able to watch the video and then assess their, learning by working through these practice exercises,

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Iain: independently, and use the H5P technology to give them instant feedback.

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Iain: So that would help them assess that learning. And if they discovered that it wasn't quite where they needed it to be, they could rewatch the video, redo the exercises, and so hopefully move through the entire sequence of videos,

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Iain: and the practice exercises supporting each other.

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Narrator: In what ways did working with true open press contribute to or shaped the project?

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Iain: I found that it's been a seamless process, which I think has been the best thing. So I came up with the idea. I made a proposal.

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Iain: Luckily it was accepted. And so I got the funding to do this. And then, I was,

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Iain: given full, scope to just kind of work through the project myself independently, which is kind of how I like to work anyway.

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Iain: And so

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Iain: Open press really just gave me the support to do that. And like I said, it was it was a seamless process.

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Iain: And then I was given, particular support, mainly through, John Fulton who,

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Iain: provided, the video support when I came to campus to record the videos. And so that was tremendously helpful.

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Iain: And he was awesome.

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Iain: And then also putting the actual website together, I think it was, Samar Khajuria who, who did that and so that was, that was tremendously helpful as well.

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Iain: I did want to just give it,

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Iain: kind of a quick shout out to a co-op student, Vansh Sethi

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Iain: because that they helped along the way to.

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Narrator: What impact do you hope this OER will have on learners and educators?

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Iain: So I'm hoping that this is going to be helpful for those students that are coming into the pre-calculus course.

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Iain: And

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Iain: got this gap for for whatever reason. So, there's a there's a big jump between high school math and university math. And so there's, there's some students that want to pursue math courses at university, but, for various reasons they they just have a little bit of a gap here with kind of the essential algebra topics.

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Iain: And so that gap might have arisen because,

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Iain: they've

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Iain: done high school math, but it was a long time ago and they've forgotten that. Or,

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Iain: there's some kind of learning challenges that are getting in the way of them grasping this material or, or they've just had a nontraditional

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Iain: academic background. And so they come into open learning now, and, they just need help kind of filling in that gap and making that transition from high school level math to university level math kind of a make that transition a little more seamless.

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Iain: And so that's that's my hope with this

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Iain: OER

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Iain: gives

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Iain: some extra resources through the videos and the exercises where they can just bridge that gap and,

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Iain: end up being successful, not just in the precalculus course, but also in, in future math courses that they might take.

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Narrator: What were some of the key challenges you encountered during development and how did you address them?

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Iain: Probably the biggest challenge was just fitting it into my schedule.

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Iain: So

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Iain: I do lots of different things at, open learning, which which I really enjoy. So as well as being an open learning faculty member. I am also a PLAR assessor so a prior learning assessment and recognition, I am an assessor for that program. And then I also, sit on a couple of committees.

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Iain: And then I also do course development work. So last year when I was working through this, I was trying to juggle all these things kind of at the same time. And so that was probably the most challenging thing, was just making sure that I

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Iain: had enough time to work through this and fit it into my schedule. But, luckily there was a lot of flexibility around that.

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Iain: And so it all it all worked out and I, I got the work done.

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Narrator: Was there a particularly memorable moment or highlight from working on this project that stands out to you?

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Iain: Yeah, I think it was when I came to campus, to record the videos. So I'd, I'd done all that kind of groundwork, and I'd created kind of scripts that I wanted to, to use and all the examples that I wanted to use. And so,

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Iain: we had a fairly ambitious target of recording 20 videos over a two day period.

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Iain: And so I was on campus and I, I

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Iain: met with with John Fulton. We started pretty early in the morning and then just kind of went through them one by one. And, I remember. It was it was tiring. It was extremely tiring.

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Iain: you record the videos, but then you might stumble, and so you want to stop and back up and do that bit again.

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Iain: And so even though each video might end up only being,

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Iain: maybe 15, 15 minutes long, the actual recording process is much longer than that because of all that, kind of stopping and starting and re-doing things. Because,

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Iain: I wanted to get things as good as possible.

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Iain: And occasionally I would make mistakes, too, because I'm, I'm writing on,

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Iain: light board.

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Iain: And so occasionally I would write things incorrectly, and so then we would have to back up and redo it.

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Iain: by the end of the second day, we'd, we got through all of them all 20, and I was just spent I was running on fumes and, then when we finally finished, it was such a high to be done.

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Iain: So I think that was that was the one that stands out for me the most is it's just being done recording the videos. And, and then my part was essentially done, but then John's part was only just beginning because, because he had to go through and edit everything.

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Iain: And we had so much material and he had to kind of edit it down into,

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Iain: relatively concise video. And so, I was happy to be done, but I was also kind of feeling for John as well, that he had a lot of work coming.

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Narrator: How do you see the role of open education evolving over the next few years?

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Iain: I hope it's it's going to just continue to grow. And I think the two areas that interest me the most, is it's, we ask like, like the one I developed. So I'm hoping that that that will just continue to grow and there will be more availability. And across all courses.

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Iain: So there's, there's some courses in some areas where it's harder to, to find OERs and so I'm hoping that we'll just continue to grow. And then I think the other area of open education that interests me is, and I mentioned this before, is the prior learning assessment and recognition. And, that's that's a part of my work that I find tremendously rewarding.

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Iain: And so I hope that continues to grow and blossom and the more students, have that opportunity to have their their prior learning recognized for credit and so that they can,

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Iain: gain the credentials they, they want a little more easily.

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Narrator: what advice would you give to someone who's interested in creating their own OER?

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Iain: I think I would just say to, kind of research the area that you're in and just see what's out there already. Because there's there's so many areas out there, and, so you don't want to be kind of reinventing the wheel and trying to create something that's actually already out there. So do that research.

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Iain: If you find that there's a gap,

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Iain: and it's a gap that you feel that you could fill then, yeah, I would encourage anyone to to,

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Iain: try and put something together that will help students succeed and, and also look into those supports that are available and, and those resources that are out there to help

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Iain: you, complete these projects. And so a great example of that, of course, is,

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Iain: TRU Open Press. I would strongly encourage anybody to, apply for, for support and resources through Open Press. Because I had a great experience.

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Narrator: Thank you for the interview, Iain!