Hi everyone. I'm Steven Dell and I am currently the co social media editor for Photo Libraries in the Academy.

And this is another in our series of interviews with portal authors. This one is sort of special because this is an interview with the authors of the best article of 2022.

We've been handing out this award for many years now, and I can tell you, having been one of the editors for a number of years, it does not get any easier to select one article to win the award because we have so many great high quality research articles that we publish every year.

But I think there was a real consensus around this particular article this year, and I don't think it took us all as much time as it usually does to find our award winner for 2022.

So I want to introduce two of the four authors of the articles that are here with us today.

First, we have Seana Smith Jaggers, who is director of the Student Success Research Lab at the Ohio State University.

So welcome, Shauna. Thank you for joining us today.
And we also have Katie Prieto, who is the assistant professor of higher education and student affairs at the University of Southern Mississippi.

And Katie was obviously previously at the Ohio State University at the time that the research was conducted and the article was written.

So again, thank you for joining us as well, Katie.

And I also do want to mention that the other coauthors of the article are Marcos de Rivera and Amanda El.

So unfortunately they were not able to join us today, but we appreciate their contributions to Portal as well.

So as I said, this is the article was titled Using Affordable Course Materials.

Instructors motivations, approaches and outcomes.

And if you had not had a chance to read the article, you can still find it available on our portal preprint site.

If you just go to the website for Portal Journal at John Hopkins University Press, you can access the article freely.

It's a preprint that's open to everyone, even if you're not a subscriber to the portal.

So again, thanks very much, Seana and Katie, for joining us.
And I want to jump in to my first question, which is I actually did a count of the number of articles that we published in 2022,

and there are 46 feature articles is quite a few to then go through that and try to figure out which were our top three,

which we then discussed and narrowed down to our eventual awardee.

And I wanted to ask you what you thought it was about the article that resonated so strongly

with the portal editors that we had the strong consensus around it as our best article of 2022.

Sure. Well, I think it has started. First, let me just say thank you so much for the honor in answering this question.

I want to center humility as well. Right. Because I don't think we were seeking awards when with when we set out to publish this.

But I think the article has several strengths that might be relevant to your readers.

One, it moves the conversation about open educational resources and other affordable learning materials beyond questions of affordability.

I think the research has centered that, and that is an important consideration.

But there was so much more here around instructor's pedagogy, and I'm excited that we were able to showcase that.
I also think there was a methodological richness to the piece.

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We had a lot of fantastic qualitative data, and as a qualitative researcher, I love hearing participant voices.

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But the way that we were able to embed the survey is to add some continuity to the conversations

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and offer some numbers for folks who might resonate more with some quantitative pieces.

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I think that was a strike. I also appreciated, and I'm sure we'll talk more about this,

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that we were able to unpack different project types and demonstrate that we are an affordable learning materials are not a monolith.

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There's so much nuance and the article got it that in preparing for our conversation today and rereading the article,

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I was struck by how much data we had in kind of remembering what it looked like to go through all that.

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It was a big undertaking and I was having some flashbacks to that and how we were able to tease all that nuance out.

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I hope that people benefit from hearing that.

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And then finally I'll say, I think that we offer some important implications for practice, and I'm sure we'll get into that as well.
But I think now from a faculty perspective, there's so much great literature out there that suggests new ideas for innovative pedagogy,

for incorporating different materials and approaches. And the big question is obvious, but how?

How do I do it? Where do I find support? What are the options available to me?

And I think we were able to spotlight some of that in this piece as well.

Yes. The piece of the article that we did find very unique, I believe,

is that you broke things out by were they a creator or the doctor or some other approach to how they integrated OCR into their teaching and.

I just wanted to follow up with a quick question. As you mention, you were getting a flashback of how much time was involved.

And I think people don't always sense that when they read these articles in your article, which has so deeply goes into the to the findings.

Could you estimate how much time your team spent on start to finish to get that project done?

Is it months and months? Well, I think we spent nearly two years writing this article, didn't we, Katie?

So and that was, you know, obviously we were working on many other projects at the same time, but I think a lot of it was just sort of the processing,
the thought processing of working through all the data that we had and figuring out what is our storyline.

Because we, we knew we had a lot of insights from it,

but we it just took us a while to figure out how to structure it in a way that would make those insights clear to a reader.

Yeah. Okay. So it doesn't sound outrageous to say two years.

It's just a very deeply researched and incredibly well-written article that is time consuming.

And we appreciate that you've made that effort. So for those who maybe didn't get a chance to delve into it as deeply as they should.

Could you briefly summarize the article and some of your key findings?

And if you did want to add it on, what was your original inspiration?

To do this research? Well, our original inspiration was that there was a initiative that was happening at the university.

It was a textbook affordability project that was providing faculty with grants to replace traditional textbooks with affordable digital learning materials, and that includes OCR and library materials.
And so the people who were running the project just were really excited and interested to get knowledge from it that they could use to to just sort of see how useful the project was to faculty and students and then how they might want to tweak it in future years of the initiative.

So we focused on the first two years of the initiative, and then our findings did sort of help inform how the initiative unfolded in later years.

And the initiative was about cost savings, but it also wanted to encourage instructors to think about whether they could innovate with new types of materials in a way that would improve student learning.

So in this study,

our first two years involved 30 instructors who taught 72 class sections across that time period that were across a wide variety of disciplines.

So we conducted interviews with 30 instructors to understand why they were motivated to adopt affordable materials,

why and how did they select and implement different types of materials?

And then did those new materials actually influence teaching and learning?

And as we alluded to earlier, what we found is four very different types of projects that instructors engaged in.
And for each type, the instructors had really different motivations and approaches.

So I'm just going to do a real quick spin through each of the four.

Yes, please go ahead.

So first was materials that were adopted pretty much wholesale or maybe with minor modifications from an existing open source textbook.

And this is what people typically think of when they think of OCR projects.

And the results for these weren't that surprising. The faculty were primarily motivated by cost savings.

They went with an existing textbook because they found one that was well aligned and no cost,

and they didn't really think it required any more time or effort than any other new textbook.

Adoption didn't really change their teaching didn't really change their students learning except that more students actually got the book.

And so we sort of think of this as a typical OCR story, but this was only four out of our 30 instructors.

The more common approach actually was new materials that the instructor created from scratch.
So these instructors were interested in cost savings, but they were maybe more motivated by the desire to more closely align their materials to their learning goals. And that included in some cases helping the students engage in deeper learning was one of their goals and they felt like they couldn't find any existing materials that did this. And they felt that the only way they could do this was to create new materials themselves. And so their projects were a lot of work. They often were not fully done by the time they started using the materials in a given semester, but they also found the process really exciting and interesting. And so they were mostly okay with that level of work. And they also thought that they were able to teach and that their students were able to learn more in depth. And that was about a third of our instructors went that route. And then there was a third approach, which was existing materials like library materials, online videos or other sort of free web based content that was curated by the instructor, almost like a digital course packet.
And so they were also interested in cost savings, but they really wanted to create more alignment between key learning objectives and their students' goals and interests. They wanted to be using more current sort of vibrant materials, and they felt like this was a lot of work and it didn't always pay off as much as they hoped.

Sometimes they felt it was hard for the students to shift between the many different types of materials and synthesize their learning across them.

And the instructors also had a lot of prep issues that would run into technical issues like online, like breaking and having to be fixed and things like that.

So then the final approach, which about nine of our instructors took are almost another third, was what we call more of an amalgam approach. So this was weaving together newly created and curated content.

And so often what this meant was like writing some kind of like a backbone narrative or a connective framework that sort of how to pull these disparate materials.
into something that felt more coherent to students and provided more context about

why are we looking at this type of writing or this type of article or whatever?

And these were the instructors who reported the greatest positive changes in terms of their teaching and their students depth of learning.

So one of the instructors told us that their students now leave the class more curious about the phenomenon that we studied.

Instead of thinking that we've answered everything like you do when the textbook just seems to be the source of all truth, and there's only one truth.

So. So that's the general. Quick summary.

Good. Thanks for for putting it together for us in a concise fashion.

And that was a kind of a core message in the article.

You know, you had these different types of projects that faculty are working on,

and that is the motivations that they bring to it or something that we can learn from.

So. My next question is about what's the big takeaway?
And you did all the research, you interviewed the faculty, collected the data and analyzed it.

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And in particular, one of the most important things about the article that I found useful.

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Okay, so how can I use this in my own institution?

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To further our advance, our oyo oyo, our initiative.

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So I mean, can you address that for just a bit? Sure.

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So I think first, when libraries or initiatives are promoting a we are they should discuss cost,

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but they shouldn't only discuss costs and helping faculty see the way that they can use these

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opportunities to enhance their teaching and enhance student learning is going to resonate with folks.

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I think we learned that and Shawna suggested that these are big undertakings and

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they didn't always get done and they didn't always get done perfectly first.

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That's okay. This is an iterative process, but I think the idea of where folks can partner is also a huge implication.

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We found that being collaborative wasn't only helpful, it was inspiring for folks and a big reason they wanted to engage in this work.
Helping people understand that if you're interested or even just curious about open and an affordability,

there are people on your campuses who can help you.

Your librarians are there to help you navigate copyright, to help you navigate putting the pieces together,

locating sources you can partner across your department, even in creative ways that help better align your materials with department wide initiatives.

And so that partnership piece, that collaborative piece for me is central to this work,

helping people understand that they are not alone if they want to embark on a project of this type and

that there's probably funding sources available or other types of material support to get the work done.

We also saw and suggest that there are some ways to even involve your students in your course material creation process.

That's one of the beautiful things about Open.

It is iterative, and so embedding this in course assignments can help you refine and revise and add to your materials as well.

Yeah, I would definitely cosign all that, Katie said.
And I think that if you're a librarian and a faculty instructor comes to you to express their interest in adapting affordable materials, or you're talking with them at a cocktail party.

The first step, the first thing to ask them is to talk through their motivation and their goals, because if their motivation is purely cost savings,

then the next step is probably to look for an open textbook and you can sort of work together to think about like what kind of textbook are you looking for and what do you want that textbook to serve?

But if their motivation is improving the alignment of their course materials or their students depth of learning,

then you can say, Well, there may be an open textbook out there that can do that,

but often faculty will find that they might want to look at some other options and sort of walk them through the other three options that we had in the article and the pros and cons of those options that they are more work.

And that way the faculty member can really have some time to make an informed decision about whether this is a straightforward textbook adoption or is this a different kind of a project and how are they going to plan that out?
That's a really important point that you both shared, that when you do get into the conversations about course materials,

I really like that idea of starting with what's your motivation here?

As opposed to you could save a lot of money for your students and make their education more affordable.

If you did this as opposed to Why do you want to do it?

Why is it important to you? And I think that's what we're hearing from and from the advocacy perspective.

So as the publishers and producers of textbooks and bookstores are coming up with

programs to reduce costs so that they can compete with the narrative of

we are and we have to find other ways to encourage faculty and motivate them to continue with these kinds of initiatives and projects.

So just to wrap up,

is there anything you can share about some of your current research interests and where you're where you're headed with some of your projects?

Well, I want to first plug that. We do have another report that's freely available online that might interest some of your readers.
It's focused on a statewide textbook affordability primary, Ohio, so it involved cross institutional teams of instructors and librarians.

So if you want to Google it and Google Scholar, it's called Try It, Make It Better Performed Implementing a statewide textbook affordability initiative.

Okay. And I don't have another OCR project on the horizon at the moment, but I'm still working in the affordability space.

Right now, I'm helping to lead a study that's focused on the university's new student debt reduction initiative.

the Scarlet and Gray Advantage Initiative. And so we're really excited about that.

Now, Katie is is on the tenure track now, and I think it is also broadening out her research.

Yeah. So first, I'll also just offer a quick plug and thank you to the Open Education Group who are sponsored by the Hewlett Foundation.

Both Dr. Rivera and I were fortunate to be our fellows and they are recruiting for their current cohort.

So we have folks are interested in our research.

There is support out there for that and I'm just grateful for the opportunity I've had to engage in that work.
And while my research agenda is taking a different direction as I've gone out on my own now beyond the Ohio State University,

I still very much value we are. So my work largely centers looking at the experiences of LGBTQ plus college students and their identities.

But what I will say is that we've done some digging into how OCR can help us diversify our.

Well, of course. I think we lost Katie there for a moment.

Guess she is referring to we have another article out that is about how we can help you diversify course materials.

So, Katie, you got frozen for a moment. All right.

I think I'm back. Thank you. Yes.

And so anyway, while I don't have a project currently, I'm hoping to dig into how we can spotlight Minoritized identities through open efforts.

Great. We will look forward to your future research and please always consider a portal for doesn't mean we're mostly about libraries,

but we're also interested in many other topics, particularly in some of our feature pieces that we have.

So again, Katie and Shauna,
I want to thank you for making yourselves available for this video interview and enlightening our readers on some of the finer points of your article,

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and I encourage them to delve into it. And again, congratulations to you and your colleagues for winning our best article published in 2022 award,

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and we'll have all sorts of fanfare later on when we get to the annual ALA conference.

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So again, thanks and best wishes and good luck in your future endeavors.

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Thank you so much. All right. Goodbye. We appreciate it.