Benefits and challenges of OER for higher education institutions

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Emergence of OER – part of the Open Movement

Open Source Software

Open Society

Open Access

Open Science

Open Licences

Open Commons

Creative Commons
Emergence of OER in Higher Education Institutions
Open Educational Resources

The open provision of educational resources, enabled by information and communication technologies, for consultation, use and adaptation by a community of users for non-commercial purposes. (UNESCO 2002)
Open Educational Practices

However, open education is not limited to just open educational resources. It also draws upon open technologies that facilitate collaborative, flexible learning and the **open sharing of teaching practices** that empower educators to benefit from the best ideas of their colleagues.
OER potential & realised benefits: MIT OpenCourseWare

Site Statistics

91 million visits by 65 million visitors from virtually every country.

OCW is accessed by a broadly international population of educators and learners.

MIT OpenCourseWare averages 1 million visits each month; translations receive 500,000 more.

Visitors from all over the world use OpenCourseWare:
Potential and realised benefits of OER
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Benefit Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sharing knowledge</strong></td>
<td>90% of MIT faculty published on OCW</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public image enhanced</strong></td>
<td>82% of MIT faculty agree</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Improve recruitment</strong></td>
<td>35% of freshmen aware of OCW before deciding to attend MIT</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resource used</strong></td>
<td>86% of MIT students use OCW</td>
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<td>73% of MIT staff use OCW</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attract alumni</strong></td>
<td>46% of alumni use OCW</td>
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Potential & realised benefits of OER: Issues for HEIs

Criteria
- Develop set of criteria for ‘measuring’ success

Research
- Scrutinise projects to gather sufficient evidence to support claims

Judge
- Track which benefits are the most meaningful to various stakeholders
Email survey: Question 1

• In the light of your experience, how well has the development and sharing of OER improved the quality of teaching and learning materials at your institution? (How is it possible to tell this?)
Reported improvements in quality

Improved availability of materials
- Students are likely to review course materials on OCW before making course enrolment decisions (Kanchanaraksa, JHSPH)

Improved technical quality
- We were able to pioneer or extend a number of e-production technologies on OpenLearn that are now widely used for standard educational material development (Lane, OU)

Improved pedagogical research
- ... we have been able to adapt a research led web-based mapping tool (Lane, OU)

Improved quality of images
- New images (charts, graphs, drawing, etc.) have been created or adapted from copyright-protected originals for course faculty to use (Kanchanaraksa, JHSPH)

Improved coherence across courses
- ... faculty will review existing course content before creating new courses (Kanchanaraksa, JHSPH)

Improved mechanism for accreditation
- ... may be able to waive course requirements by passing waiver exams after reviewing OCW content (Kanchanaraksa, JHSPH)

Created opportunity for external endorsement
- Quality is determined by endorsement through the 'lens' system in Connexions (Thierstein, Connexions)
Quality improvement: Issues for HEIs

Evidence anecdotal
- Of institutions surveyed, only MIT had undertaken formal evaluation processes

Some promising practices
- Endorsement through ‘lens’ system as a mechanism for accreditation and endorsement
- Waiver exams may provide mechanism for self-learners

Too early to judge
- In essence we expect the major impact of OER over time to come more from the way they cause academics and support staff to review and improve their educational practices away from more closed to more open educational practices (Lane, OU)
Email survey: Question 4

• In the light of your experience has OER assisted in generating additional funding for your institution and if so can this be quantified?
Reported reduction in costs

Additional funds sought
• Some faculty members have applied for external funding to develop training materials with the specific goal of using the OCW site to disseminate the content (Kanchanaraksa, JHSPH)

Increased number of registrations
• ... we have tracked users of OpenLearn and some have gone direct from the site to register on a course online in the same session thus contributing through course fees (Lane, OU)

Lower some marketing costs
• OER can help lower some costs, particularly around promotion and marketing (Lane, OU)

Enable new service business model
• changing our business model from offering courses to offering services, in which a main part of the materials will be offered as OERs. ... payments for the services should then be enough to finance the OERs (Schuwer, OUNL)

Enable new funding streams
• Standard affiliate agreement with Amazon which nets us about $40 K per year. Not huge, but money otherwise left on the table (Carson, MIT)
Cost reduction: Issues for HEIs

- **OER will need additional funding, not less**
  - Of institutions surveyed none indicated direct cost reduction, but rather that additional funding being sought – HEIs will still need to seek funding for OER development in creative ways

- **Indirect cost reductions to be tracked**
  - Some evidence of marketing costs being lowered, which therefore need to be monitored

- **Indirect increases in revenue to be tracked**
  - Some evidence of increased registrations and therefore increased tuition fees, which therefore need to be tracked

- **Enable new business models**
  - Some evidence of new service models including “waiver exams”
Anticipated and unexpected challenges of OER
Anticipated & Additional Challenges

- Copyright challenges
- Lack of awareness of copyright
- Embedded copyright

- Infrastructure
- Development costs
- Maintenance costs
  - Raising funds
  - Range of strategies

- Broadband
- Interoperability
- Meta data standards

- Lack of technical skills
- Unwillingness to share
- Unwillingness to use
- Assuring quality
- Incentives - time
- Pedagogic skills

- Technical
- Economic
- Social
- Legal
Quality assurance: locus of responsibility

Lecturer
Group of lecturers
Users
Institutional
Across institutions
Other organisations
National
International
Email survey: Question 2

• What processes has your institution established to assure the quality of OER developed and shared by your institution?
Quality assurance: locus of responsibility in survey

- Lecturer
- Group of lecturers
- Users
- Institutional
- Across institutions
- Other organisations
- National
- International
Financial sustainability models

Membership
- OCWC
- Connexions Consortium

Donations
- MIT alumni

Conversion
- Connexions - printing

Corporate sponsorship
- Connexions

Institutional
- MIT, OU, JHSPH, OUNL, UCT

Government
- OU
- OUNL

Foundation
- MIT, OU, JHSPH, OUNL, UCT

Value-add
- OUNL

Affiliate agreements
- MIT - Amazon
Email survey: Question 3

• How has your institution’s OER initiative been funded to-date? (If possible it would be useful to know approximately how much and over what period of time your institution has received funding from donor agencies/government/alumni/commercial organizations etc.)
Financial sustainability models - popular

**Membership**
- OCWC
- Connexions Consortium

**Donations**
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**Corporate sponsorship**
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**Government**
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**Affiliate agreements**
- MIT - Amazon
Quality assurance, sustainability and the institutional response
Agency of lecturers

... individuals develop and define their ultimate concerns, those internal goods that they care about most (Archer 2007:42)
Agency of lecturers

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Ultimate concern

Projects

... develop course(s) of action to realise that concern by elaborating a project
Agency of lecturers

Ultimate concern

... individuals develop and define their ultimate *concerns*, those internal goods that they care about most (Archer 2007:42)

Practices

... translated into a set of established *practices*

Projects

... develop course(s) of action to realise that concern by elaborating a *project*
Agency of lecturers

Ultimate concern

- Sharing knowledge
- Develop a reputation

Practices
- Materials design
- Technical skills
- Legal knowledge

Projects
- Develop materials
- Share as OER
Institutional responses

- Acknowledge value of teaching and teaching materials

Priority of teaching

- Material design advice and support
- Legal advice and support for 3rd party copyright clearing
- Technical advice and support - multimedia

Practices

Projects

- Infrastructure
- Resources
- Incentives
Final thoughts

• Additional research into cost-effectiveness of OER
• Explore and implement a range of funding strategies
• Explore and implement a range of quality assurance strategies
• Reflect on centrality of teaching in the higher education enterprise and decide to raise the status of teaching materials and practices
Degrees of openness

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| Suitable file formats         | PDF, password protected document file               | Wiki, xml, ODF, html |

| Most restrictive              |                                                   | Most accommodating |

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