Understanding OERs in Higher Education

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Defining the Concept

- Educational resources that are freely available for use by educators and learners, without an accompanying need to pay royalties or licence fees
- Broad spectrum of frameworks emerging to govern how OERs are licensed for use, some of which simply allow copying and others that make provision for users to adapt the resources that they use

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How do CC Licenses Work?

- CC licences are based on four specific conditions:
  - attribution,
  - share alike,
  - non-commercial and
  - no derivative works

creative commons

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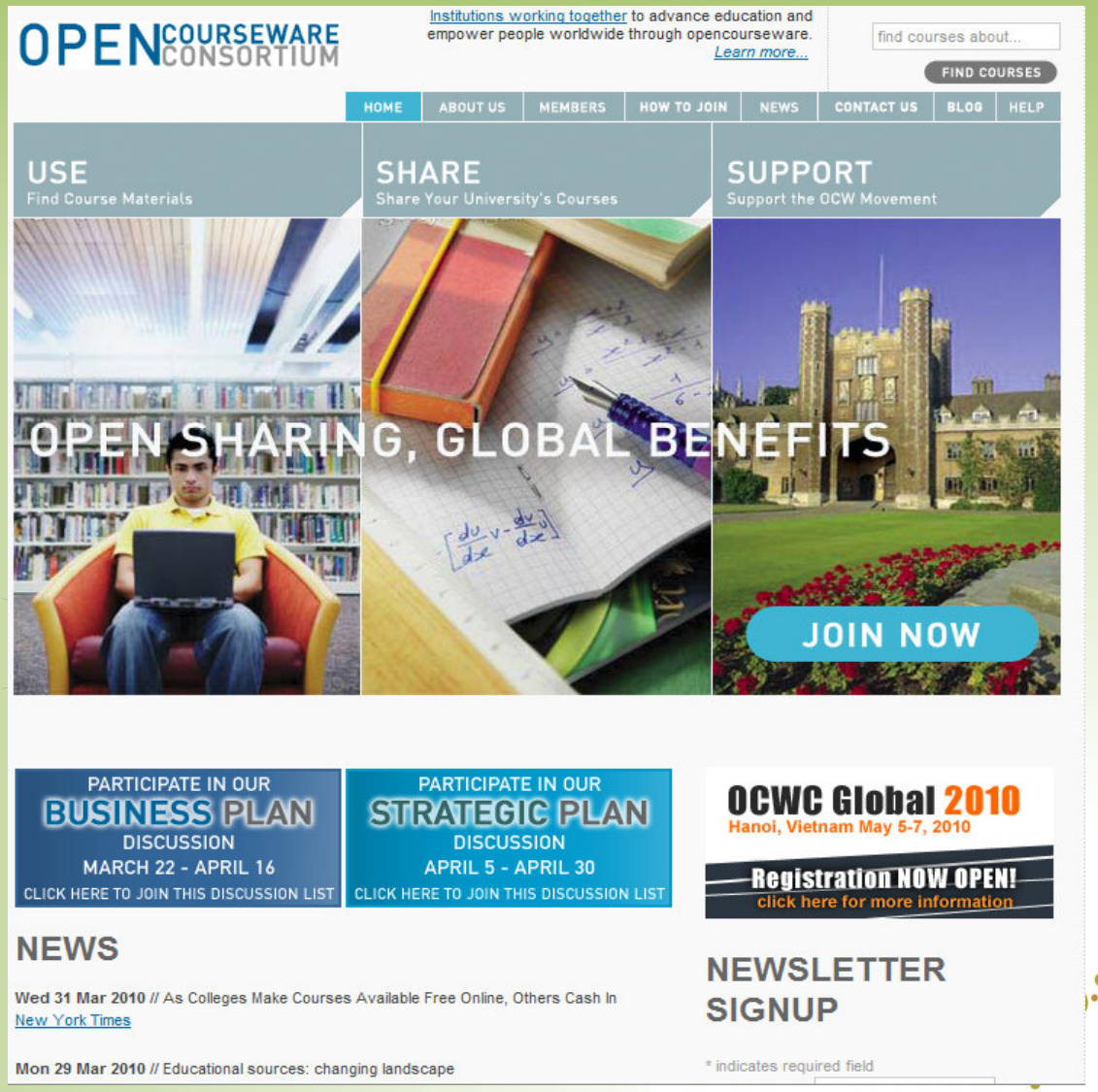
Examining The Landscape

OCW Initiatives

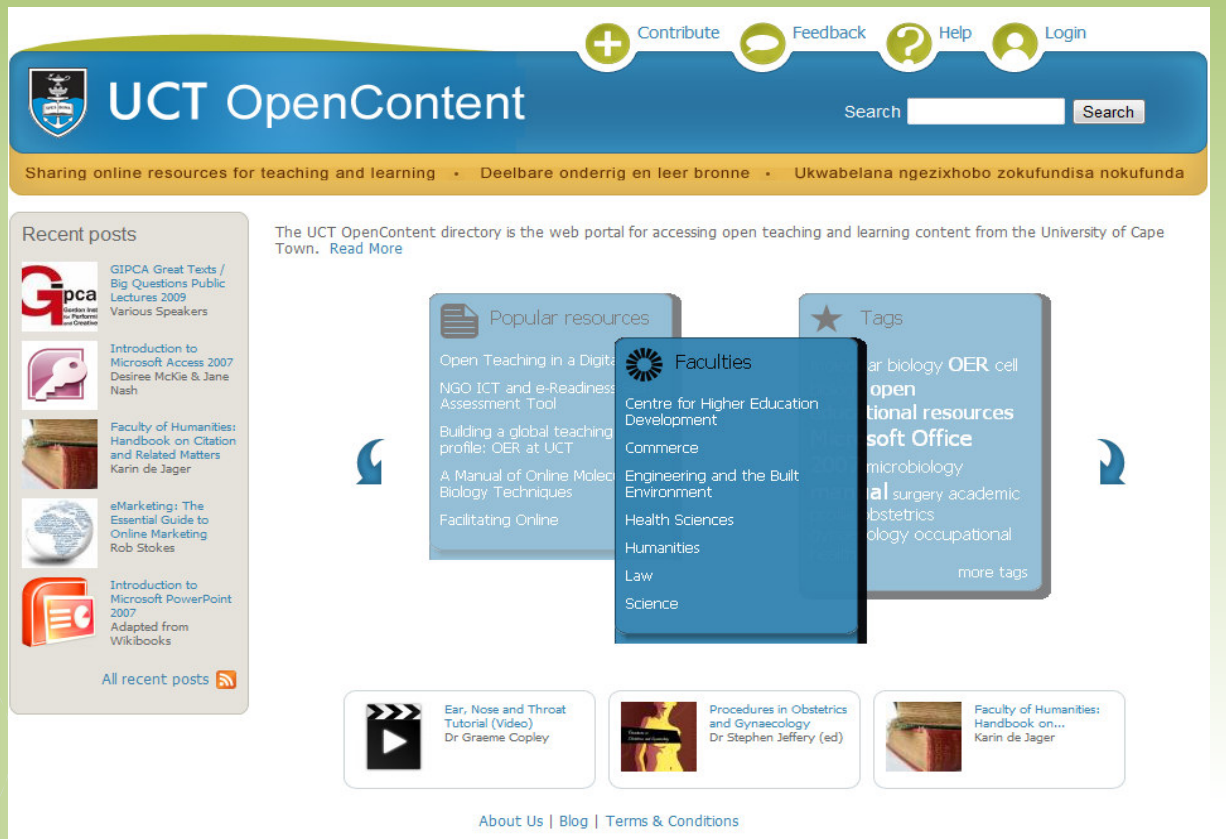
- OCW Consortium
- OER Commons
- Merlot
- CORE
- Jorum
- Health Education Assets Library
- Etc



Examining The Landscape

Institutional Initiatives

- MIT OCW
- Open Learn (OU UK)
- UCT Open Content
- UNOW
- University of Michigan
- Etc



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Examining The Landscape

Content Development Projects

- TESSA
- Health OER
- AVU
- SAIDE AceMaths
- University of Malawi
- Etc

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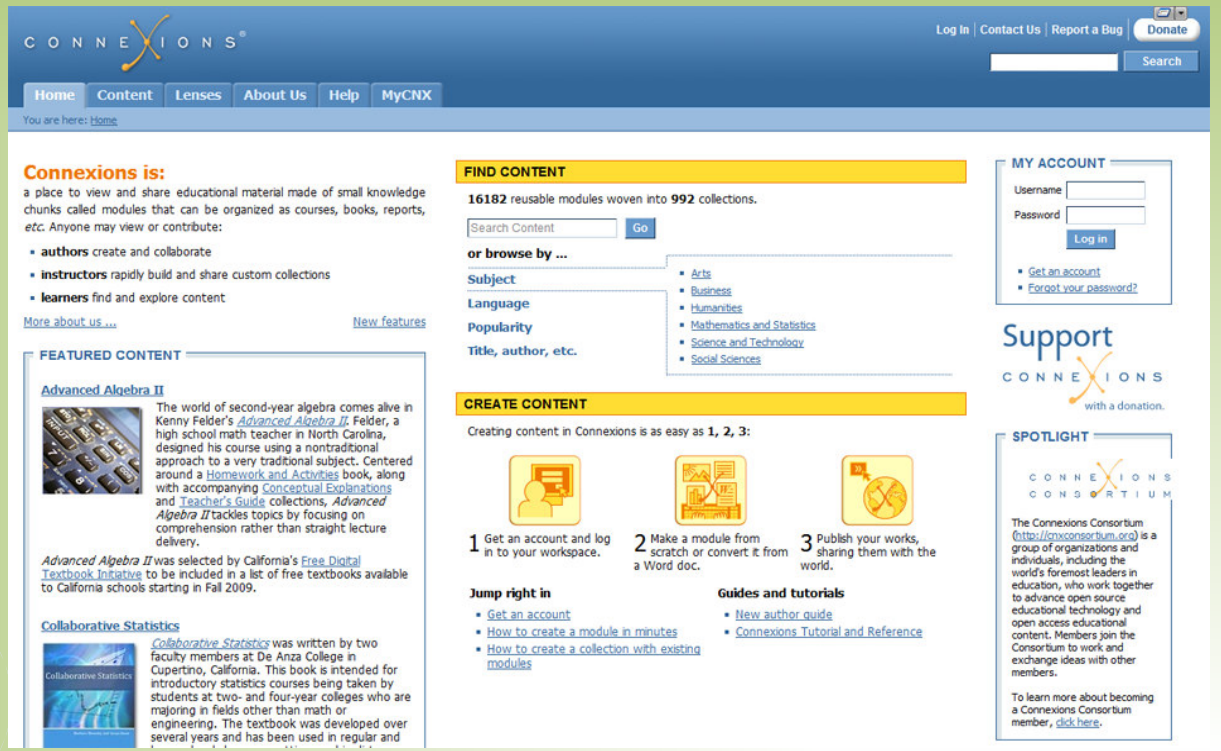
Examining The Landscape

Web Eco-Systems

- Connexions
- Wikieducator
- iTunesU
- DiscoverEd
- Folksemantic
- COL
- Etc



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An Economic Shift

- Free sharing of educational content is not really a question of choice
- The wave is building, and the key question is: how do we ride it rather than being drowned by it?

Shift question from

- 'why should I share my educational content?'

to

- 'how can I stay in control of the process of my educational content being shared?'

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Institutionalizing Openness

- Increase investment in creating more effective teaching and learning environments
- The most cost-effective way to do this is to embrace open licensing environments
- To be effective and sustainable, such strategic decisions will likely need to be accompanied by review of institutional policies

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Unlocking the Potential

- Vast quantities of educational material are already available from which no-one is generating any meaningful commercial return
- These represent a common intellectual capital that should be unlocked to drive and support education rather than kept hidden away from sight

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Unlocking the Potential

- Initial results of sharing are and will be messy – and there will be many problems to solve (storage, discovery, QA, etc)
- But online communities have demonstrated the now indisputable power and value of lots of people working collaboratively towards a common cause
- Doing this in education has potential to restore core values of building and sharing knowledge that underpin good education, and systematically encourage us to work with and learn from each other

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