



Practising Open Education – Developing the Potential of Open Educational Resources in Art, Design and Media

**Faculty of Art and Design, De Montfort University
FOCUS GROUP REPORT**

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1. Introduction

The *Practising Open Education Project* is part of the Academy-JISC funded UK Open Educational Resources (UK-OER) Programme (<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/oer>) which seeks to investigate and embed the most effective pathways for the sustainable release, and use, of open educational resources (OERs) across a range of subject disciplines.

There are challenges to the development of open educational practice in the 'creative' disciplines of art, design and media. The pilot *Art Design Media-Open Educational Resources (ADM-OER) Project 2009-10* (<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/sector-projects/contentfolder.2010-04-22.7419312795>) identified a number of salient themes: for example, individual, as well as institutional, identity plays a significant role in progressing OER policies and practices; the sector employs a considerable number of fractional staff, many of whom will teach across institutions and maintain another professional practice; as art, design and media production comprises the object of study, many resources contain essential third party-content. The project highlighted how dialogue with staff across the participating institutions offered opportunities to address these aspects.

Managed by the Art Design Media Higher Education Academy Subject Centre (ADM-HEA), and with six art, design and media departments as partners, the *Practising Open Education Project* (<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/sector-projects/practicing-open-education-2013-developing-the-potential-of-open-educational-resources-in-art-design-and-media>) aims to build on the pilot phase by enabling departmental exploration of perceptions of OERs, motivations for, and barriers to, their development and use prior to the development of departmental strategies for each participating department.

The project seeks to negotiate change by engaging directly with staff and cascading the experiences, understandings and outputs of the *ADM-OER Project* to a wider range of art, design and media departments. By encouraging dialogue across the institutions – between students, information services, departmental managers and teaching staff – the project aims to identify key areas to be targeted in order to instigate processes that promote the creation and use of OERs.

2. Project Partners

- Leeds Trinity University College – Department of Media Film and Culture
- Bucks New University – School of Design, Craft and Visual Arts
- De Montfort University – Faculty of Art and Design
- Kingston University – Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture
- University of Southampton – Winchester School of Art
- University of Hertfordshire – School of Creative Arts

3. Project Aims and Objectives

- To generate department-specific understandings of art, design and media OERs; motivations for, and barriers to, their creation and use.
- To further develop discipline-specific understandings of art, design and media OERs; motivations for, and barriers to, their creation and use.
- To provide targeted support that addresses the specific needs, motivations and barriers at the participating departments.
- To embed effective OER practices and policies within the participating departments.
- To release a significant number of art, design and media resources for access, use and repurpose.

4. Focus Groups Aims

The Focus Group's objective was to bring together key stakeholders at each of the partner institutions in order to collect information about:

- Perceptions of art, design and media OERs; motivations for, and barriers to, their creation and use
- Repository facilities in place
- Technical support
- Institutional support
- Resources with OER potential

The Project Management team's role is to report back findings from the Focus Group and offer recommendations as appropriate. This report will be sent to the project contact at each partner institution to inform the development of an OER **Action Plan**.

In addition, the Focus Groups offer an opportunity for ADM-HEA to inform the participants what experiences, outcomes and resources were collated from the pilot project and the types of support that are available to the project partners.

5. Focus Group Report Structure

The focus groups followed a series of set questions (see Appendix A: *Focus Group Questions*), which were designed to address the key aims. The summaries of the responses to the questions are available on a spreadsheet (Appendix B), which details the comments from all the six project focus groups.

However, the participants were encouraged to engage in open discussions and, as a result, the responses did contain a wide range of opinions and comments that address multiple OER-related topics.

The participants' responses were then collated under key themes:

- **Technology:** staff engagement with digital materials and platforms
- **Intellectual Property and Copyright**
- **Pedagogic Cultures and Practices**
- **Institutional Contexts:** profile, marketing and strategic support

Note: The themes are broad and not mutually exclusive but designed to draw together comments into appropriate contexts to facilitate analysis.

6. Focus Group Final Composition - Faculty of Art and Design, De Montfort University

Participants: 11 members of staff – teaching, technical support, professional development

Sub-disciplines represented – Fashion Technology; Fashion and Textiles (Contextual Studies); Architecture; Design Management and Innovation; Interior Design.

7. Valuable Resources

- Materials and links on VLE
- TED (<http://www.ted.com/>)
- Wordpress <http://wordpress.org/>)
- Portable Learning Journals – available through VLE
- Aggregator (RSS feeds, etc)
- Vimeo - video streaming (<http://vimeo.com/>)
- AUDACITY – voice recording software (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>)
- Magazines and journals
- Land of Lost Content - information for design (<http://www.lolc.co.uk/>)

8. Technology

“DMU seems to be ‘code fixated’ ... we’re restrained by technology.”

“DMU has a YouTube Video Library, but it’s very problematic and you need information [that is not widely known] to access.”

“Blackboard is limiting for students.”

“We need guidelines on how to [create, upload, download, use].”

“A ‘hub’ would be very valuable.”

Focus group participants indicated that they integrate a range of online materials, platforms and communication tools into their teaching and research; they referred to communication tools such as blogs (Wordpress); a video sharing platform (Vimeo) an information ‘Aggregator’, named services proving access to online video tutorials (TED), as well as a particular website (Land of Lost Content – the ‘Nation Museum of British Popular Culture.’

Further, participants spoke of the means by which digital teaching and learning materials are made available on the institution’s intranet, the virtual learning environment and a De Montfort University

YouTube channel. However, participants also said that access to these is limited, mostly, to those within the institution:

“We have some things on the Intranet but the problem is this isn’t global.”

Participants suggested that there is a level of anxiety regarding the digitisation of teaching materials, specifically a lack of staff confidence in using emerging technologies to develop ‘open educational resources’ and that technological support would be needed to develop more open educational practices:

“Do I want that person to see...”

“Technology support is needed.”

Participants in the group suggested that the project could work with the Information Technology (IT) department to develop an appropriate hub or repository that will allow uploading and accessing of open content and it was suggested that Moodle (<http://moodle.org/>) or other open course management systems could be investigated:

“We need to create a virtual space.”

9. Intellectual Property and Copyright

“DMU library [supporting the key objective of technology-enhanced teaching] ... is focusing on copyright and IP issues.”

“How global are we ... how open is open? Even with supposedly open platforms such as Flickr you need to have a specific email address or there are log-in requirements.”

“I’ve been uploading video on to Vimeo and it is being used by 3rd parties but I feel the need to be in control.”

The group did not discuss the topics of intellectual property, copyright and licensing to any great extent. Participants do not seem to perceive these issues as unduly inhibitive but rather as an integral component of using and creating teaching materials.

Participants are currently negotiating IP and copyright in an informal and ad hoc way, nevertheless the group were aware of underlying issues, and indicated they would appreciate further guidance. It was suggested that this could be addressed at an institutional level; indeed the university library is currently working in this area.

“We need information [IP and copyright guidance].”

Participants expressed the view that the term ‘open’ is misleading and there are degrees, and conditions of ‘openness’ that need to be explored in the context of the department. A number of the group suggested that this ambiguity about ‘open-ness’ needs to be addressed in discussions about OERs.

10. Pedagogic Cultures & Practices

“What are the aims of OER? A bit unclear.”

“We’re suffering information overload ... online can fragment information, can send students in related, or to unrelated areas.”

“We need to accommodate different student needs.”

“We need to negotiate a new learning environment.”

“Must always bear in mind that it is peers not students accessing and assessing [the resources].”

“We’re about to put interviews with teaching staff online for global access.”

“I have a case study globally available through Writing Pad.”

“Sharing helps students but is it eroding staff roles?”

“They are useful for those who do not have English as a first language – they can take time to digest information.”

“Useful tool for undergraduates to use as a recap tool – Vimeo for example.”

“Facebook and podcasting guidance in staff development day changed teaching practice.”

“We are the ‘original’ content providers ... we may need support across the department – raise the profile.”

10.1 Definitions and the role of OERs

The term ‘open educational resources’ was perceived as abstract and unhelpful. Participants spoke of developing a definition that would be underpinned by department-specific motivations for digitizing resources and making them openly available on the web.

There was a suggestion that the fundamental purpose of OERs is unclear and responses suggested a need for much firmer evidence to support the development of open educational practice; in particular participants raised many questions about the pedagogic value of OERs in the context of existing teaching practices in art, design and media higher education.

“I’d like some empirical evidence for the benefits ... students [and staff] are suffering from information overload.”

10.2 Using and creating open educational resources

Participants expressed a keenness to investigate and become involved in open educational practice and indicated that they access a range of online resources that they integrate into their teaching and learning practice.

Staff appeared to be developing digital resource practices individually rather than collectively and the resources utilised for teaching and learning were fit for purpose rather than from specific teaching and learning repositories; none of the bespoke websites identified were seemingly used on a regular basis by others in the group but identified by personal preferences.

Several participants highlighted digitised materials they had made, or would be making, available online for educational use. These were generally hosted by organisations external to the institution.

“I have an activity available under a Creative Commons license through the *Fashioning an Ethical Industry* website” (<http://fashioninganethicalindustry.org/home/>)

Participants highlighted resources of two distinct types; resources they had used to inform their teaching practice *and* resources (online lectures and tutorials, for example,) they had passed on through the VLE to students as an ‘addition’ to their own teaching.

Several participants in the group called for the involvement of students in determining how the resources could be accessed and used; the impact of open educational practice on the student learning experience was deemed the central concern.

10.3 Impacts on teaching and the student experience

Participants spoke of a general impact of the online environment on student learning behaviours and of ‘negotiating’ this ‘new learning environment’. For students, one participant suggested:

“Working online is their modality. Google shapes their behaviour.”

Several participants suggested that this online ecology of which open educational practice is part has implications for teaching practice; positioning tutors as ‘guides’ supporting students in navigating information:

“Are we no longer teachers but facilitators or guides?”

In the main participants perceived OERs as representing information sources to which staff needed to provide context, guidance, skills and experience – they were deemed facilitators needed to help students manage information.

Several participants commented that digital multimedia resources, including OERs, potentially offer greater flexibility to teaching staff and provide more dynamic materials with which to engage students.

“You Tube is good for examples and case studies ... it validates what you’re saying ... and also adds colour [to your teaching] for students.”

“[It] makes topics more interesting.”

Further discussion about the benefits of such resources encompassed their value specifically to students for whom English is a second language, but also as an aide-memoire to students more generally. Participants also suggested that skills-based OERs can have a range of benefits to students and staff, and many of these are already available online and may not need reproducing.

However, one participant suggested that there are difficulties in monitoring the use of online resources:

“Students may not, or choose not, to download these resources.”

10.4 Time and Work

Participants expressed concern about the impact of open educational practice on staff workloads, roles and, ultimately, authority:

“Does it add depth or take away from what we do? ... It certainly adds to the workload.”

On balance, however, there was the belief that OERs could relieve the pressure on staff in terms of workload and teaching procedures which could free up time for more student-centred activities:

“It frees up time to give to students.”

In this respect, several participants spoke, in particular, of the benefits of openly accessible resources for skills-based teaching; for example, online tutorials illustrating technical processes. The availability and use of such resources has potential to save time.

Concerns were raised on behalf of visiting lecturers. Their role within the department is perceived as being invaluable and there were concerns over openly sharing aspects of their professional practice.

11. Institutional Context – Profile, marketing and strategic support

“We need guidelines on how to [create, upload, download, use].”

“We need technical support.”

“We need information [IP and copyright guidance].”

“Coordination, articulation, communication, dissemination.”

“Need to define our aims.”

“Need to outline an appropriate structure.”

“Show and tell ... allow staff to demonstrate their work and their resources.”

“It all seems to be about ‘branding’ ... [OERs become complicit in this].”

“The MIT model is a natural extension for them as an institution, so appropriate for MIT – DMU cannot say the same.”

“Everything is [ultimately] about profit ... OERs would seem to present a platform from which to market.”

“We need a proper network.”

11.1 Institutional profile and marketing

Several participants suggested that there are marketing benefits to the development of open educational practice. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was mentioned as a benchmark for OERs and this was situated in the context of marketing and institutional profiling. However, participants suggested that DMU must position OERs in a way to support their own development pathway.

The *Practising Open Education* project was also perceived as a way to raise the profile of the department within the institution:

“We are the ‘original’ content providers ... we may need support across the department – raise the profile.”

11.2 Quality Assurance and sustainability

Several participants raised concerns about different audiences’ perceptions of the quality of OERs in the context of their marketing potential. A more systematic approach to the creation of resources was believed to be important:

“The look [aesthetic] and quality of resource is important ... we are competing with professionals.”

“We need to live up to students’ expectations.”

“We need them to be standardized.”

Tutors who use learning and teaching resources openly available on the web expressed concern over their security and sustainability:

“... but my concern is will it disappear? Who will maintain it? Can I download it or will this be problematic?”

“I use certain online resources but [for an additional payment] also buy the book which allows me to use in perpetuity.”

11.3 Institutional Support

“DMU can support all this ... there is a groundswell of support at the institution.”

Participants identified strong institutional support for the development of open educational practice and spoke of the ‘barriers’ to the development of open educational practice in terms of what would be needed to proceed.

Several participants suggested that more time is needed to discuss and understand OERs in order to assess how they can benefit students, tutors, departments and the institution more generally.

However, much of the discussion centred on individual staff engagement with technology and digital materials rather than on formal policies or practices driven by the department or institution. Participants suggested that the development of open educational practice would be more effectively addressed through a coordinated institutional/departmental strategy, key components of which would be student involvement, clearer information, guidelines for production and use of OERs including IP and copyright, the winning of hearts and minds (networking opportunities), quality assurance mechanisms, technological support, and the allocation of time.

“We need a coordinated strategy.”

Practical suggestions for next steps included workshops, discussions, and a survey; strategies to ensure clear communication, to encourage staff involvement, to clarify understandings and to inform the development of policies.

“A survey ... draw out goals and understandings”

12. Ideas to consider

The following ‘ideas to consider’ are based on staff contributions to the focus group discussions. We hope that these suggestions will help to support the development of open educational practice within the department.

The suggestions are presented in the context of existing support agencies, initiatives and documentation that are available from the UK OER Programme, the ADM-OER Pilot Project and relevant websites listed below.

- **Identify and draw upon expertise and resources across the institution – in particular marketing, information technology, library and legal services.**
- **Align the development of open educational practice with the institution’s key strategic goals.**
- **Embed the project Action Plan in the institution’s technology enhanced learning strategy.**
- **Develop relationships between the *Practising Open Education* project and other current institutional initiatives (see below).**

- **Provide opportunities and encourage staff to further explore definitions, motivations and benefits of open educational practice.**
- **Explore what types of teaching and learning resources are best suited to OER creation and use.**
- **Explore available repositories and the potential for open access.**
- **Identify technological support needs.**
- **Provide staff with appropriate IP and copyright guidance on issues associated with open educational resources through library and legal services and programme support (see below).**
- **Degrees of ‘openness’ - explore ‘tiered’ approaches to releasing resources. Develop staff confidence in the creation of resources by the controlled release and sharing of materials through the institutional platforms.**
- **Investigate appropriate licenses for materials made available – explore Creative Commons licenses suited to staff needs and considerations.**
- **Student involvement - ensure that students are involved in the development of the OER Action plan. Students can help inform the rationale for developing open educational practice in the department**
- **Explore the potential for the development of resources through curriculum and assessment design.**
- **Visiting and fractional staff – Involve visiting and fractional staff in the development of the OER Action plan.**
- **Eventually, a clear OER policy statement will help sustain burgeoning open educational practice in the department / institution.**

General Information

Associated De Montfort Projects

Virtual Analytical Laboratory -VAL Project (UK OER Programme Phase 1) and Scooter Project (UK OER Programme Phase 2) from De Montfort for their work on web reporting, user tracking and search engine optimization.

VAL Project:

http://hlsweb.dmu.ac.uk/ahs/elearning/RITA/oer_research.html

Scooter Project:

<http://scooter.dmu.ac.uk> (Website)



Practising Open Education - Developing the Potential of Open Educational Resources in Art, Design and Media Subjects 2010-11 – FOCUS GROUP REPORT - March 2011

<http://scooter-dmu.blogspot.com/> (Blogger)

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Scooter/155504337795260?ref=ts> (Facebook)

Technical

CETIS – the JISC Innovation Support Centre for UK further and higher education on standardisation, strategic, technical and pedagogical advice: <http://blogs.cetis.ac.uk/lmc/2010/12/03/oyer-2-technical-requirements/>

For advice and support on technical issues contact CETIS OER Programme Support Officer R. John Robertson at robert.robertson@strath.ac.uk

XERTE – Based at the University of Nottingham and part of the UK OER Programme the Xerte Project allows non-technical staff to quickly and easily build accessible, and interactive resources:

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/xerte/>

Copyright and Intellectual Property

The guidelines, templates and other documents made available by the ADM-OER Phase 1 Project as PDFs can provide a first step (<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/sector-projects/contentfolder.2010-04-22.7419312795>)

The range of support available through the JISC UK OER Programme:

Good Practice in Rights Clearance and Licensing: <http://www.web2rights.com/>

Blog: <http://www.web2rights.com/OERIPRSupport/blog/?p=54>

General Information

Open Educational Resources Information Kit – For information on the UK OER Programme: <https://openeducationalresources.pbworks.com/w/page/24836480/Home>

Jorum Open –UK OER Programme Repository: <http://www.jorum.ac.uk/>

Visual Arts Data Service (VADS): <http://www.vads.ac.uk/>

Useful Documents, Information and Guidance – ADM-OER Project 2009-10

A range of outputs from the *Art Design Media-Open Educational Resources (ADM-OER) Project 2009-10* including: Intellectual Property, Copyright and Licensing Guidance; OER Depositor Agreement; OER Release Forms; Seeking Permission from Publishers Letter; OER Creation Flow Chart and a range of additional reports.

These are available to download from the ADM-HEA Subject Centre website:

<http://www.adm.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/sector-projects/contentfolder.2010-04-22.7419312795>



Appendix A



Focus Group Questions

Introduction

1. Could you tell us who you are and what you consider your most valuable learning resource?
2. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think of 'open educational resources'?

Key questions

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development defined Open Educational Resources as follows:

'...digitised materials offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching learning and research.'

3. Can you tell us about any OERS you have produced?
4. Can you tell us about any OERs you have used or re-used?
5. What are the benefits to getting involved in this?
 - To the institution?
 - To the department?
 - To the teaching staff?
 - To the students?
 - To the discipline?
 - Other?
6. What are the barriers to getting involved in this?
7. If you had control of the available funds to help develop OER practice in your department how would you choose to spend it?
8. Of all the aspects of open educational resources we discussed, which one is the most important to you?

Appendix B

See separate document: *Practising Open Education – Focus Group Thematic Spreadsheet*