



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

**School of Design, Craft & Visual Arts, Bucks New University
FOCUS GROUP REPORT**

Prepared by: Stephen Mallinder and Debbie Flint - Art Design Media-Higher Education
Academy Subject Centre (University of Brighton)

March 2011

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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 – School of Design, Craft & Visual Arts, Bucks New University

13 participants: teaching staff, course leaders, library staff, department management, learning development, distributed learning, director of student experience, technical staff, head of school.

Sub-disciplines represented: textiles, graphics, media, furniture design, film and television.

7. Valuable Resources

- UKfilmNet (<http://www.ukfilmnet.org/exponent/>)
- Staff / colleagues
- Conferences
- Technical support
- Library Intute system
- YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/>)
- iTunes U (<http://www.apple.com/education/itunes-u/>)

8. Technology

"The great thing about standards is there are so many."

"There is no real HE repository."

Participants drew attention to a number of issues regarding technology and facilities that could be harnessed to help support greater involvement in open educational practice. In particular, they referred to 'Bucks Television', the university webTV site (developed in a marketing context), UKfilmNet, a project funded by the UK Film Council.

Focus group participants discussed the absence of an institutional repository that could house open educational resources; existing resources are currently uploaded to YouTube.

"They're housed on YouTube as there is no real HE repository."

The inherent costs of developing the infrastructure to house resources was acknowledged:

“The scaffolding for open resources is core so needs to be high standard and this involves cost.”

Participants spoke of a number of resources that have been developed for distinct purposes. For example, participants highlighted videos made to demonstrate techniques in Digital Animation and housed on YouTube:

“In digital animation there is a lack of technical support so we have videos to show technique – this is growing resource more being made.”

9. Intellectual Property and Copyright

The group did not raise specific IP, copyright or licensing issues as the majority of current teaching and learning resources are housed within closed institutional systems or on bespoke websites.

However one participant raised concerns in this regard on behalf of guest lecturers who they felt would be much more protective of their teaching and learning materials and not enthusiastic about the department making the materials they produced freely accessible online.

“There are issues for visiting lecturers [in offering resources used as OERs]”.

10. Pedagogic Cultures & Practices

“[I associate OERs with] help that’s usable.”

“Open is an interesting concept ...”

“... it’s difficult once you get past the enthusiast.”

“It has to be fun ... “

10.1 Definitions and the role of OERs

Participants associated ‘open educational resources’ with a range of positive terms: “open”, “cooperation”, “free?”, “accessible”, “help that’s usable” and “repurposable” were key phrases used.

Discussions about the ‘role’ of open educational resources encompassed their potential to enhance and invigorate teaching practices, to enhance the student learning experience and to raise the profile of the institution.

For several participants OERs provide opportunities for researching wider learning and teaching practices:

“Checking other ways of teaching.”

Their pedagogic role is considered complex and participants spoke of the need to consider this role in a pedagogic context, and with an understanding the learner’s use of materials:

“When you develop an OER you need to think of the pedagogy - context of the student not the teacher.”

“We need to differentiate between a *teaching* resource and a *learning* resource. The students need to differentiate.”

Much discussion focused on the pedagogic appropriateness of OERs; participants suggested that it is important to avoid generalizations and specify resources in concrete terms to ensure that these are appropriate to the disciplinary and pedagogic context.

“[We] need to think in terms of tangible resources (for example print) to upgrade to published versions ... with online it’s horses for courses.”

One participant spoke the creativity that can be employed in developing new teaching and learning resources:

“It has to be fun ... should stress enjoyment of this type of project”

10.2 Using and creating open educational resources

Participants provided some examples of resources designed to meet the specific needs of existing students or for the purposes of institutional marketing. They further provided examples of use of existing open educational resources, to enhance the process and experience of teaching.

Some participants spoke of generating relatively cheap resources for open access, to meet specific pedagogic needs. For example, participants highlighted videos made to demonstrate techniques in Digital Animation uploaded to YouTube to provide open access to technical support. Another tutor, spoke of a recording he had made of a tutor talking about relationships between design theory and practice.

“There are lots of carrier bag solutions [quick fixes].”

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At the other end of the spectrum, one participant spoke at length about UKfilmNet, a project funded by the UK Film Council, which provides learning materials in moving image arts. In this context, the financial cost of production and the maintenance of suitable websites prohibits making resources freely available. The cost involved is a consideration to how these materials are made available and used:

“Open is an interesting concept ... quality is dependent on time on production, so cost is an issue. We want to make resources open but there can be £1/4 million in hidden costs, we’ve had support from UK Film Council for example, so ‘open’ needs to be addressed to make sure the process can be sustainable ... it needs subscription to maintain to make open.”

Participants spoke of using OERs in a range of different ways; for example, one participant spoke of using OERs to spark ideas and the imagination:

“[I use OERs] not so much for finding materials [to directly use] but more of a process to generate ideas.”

Others spoke of more wholesale use where appropriate resources already exist online, and the need to consider the current availability of resources:

“Why reinvent the wheel ... there are so many materials out there so need to duplicate - for example with NESTA fashion resources.”

“Only if resources are specifically for learning, Sketchbook for example...”

10.3 Impacts on teaching and the student experience

The group gave much consideration to students’ perspectives and how open educational practices can support skills development, collaborative learning and enrichment of the student learning experience. Students were identified as being vital to informing the process of the developing open educational practices.

Participants sought reassurance and further evidence of the pedagogic value of open educational resources and clarification of the relationship between open educational resources and existing teaching practices. Much discussion took place on the balance between ‘face-to-face’ and ‘online’ learning, the relationships between ‘information’ and ‘education’ and the role of tutors in navigating the online ecology and in contextualizing learning more generally.

“But this is what we SHOULD be doing.”

“Is there anything we do face-to-face that we are better showing online?”

“We need to see this from the learners’ point of view ... it’s online, it’s audience driven.”

“This is about the delivery of content ... it is discursive and we are mediating [the content].”

It was felt by the group that students should be supported in negotiating a content-rich online environment:

“It’s essential that the resources are contextualized.”

“Are we giving students enough space? ... There are so many resources available.”

Discussion also took place about the pedagogic-appropriateness of open educational resources:

“We need to consider ‘medium suitability’ – whether it’s for film or fashion.”

“We should try not to replace lectures but show techniques.”

10.4 Time and Work

Participants highlighted several barriers to the development of open educational practice; a lack of staff time, a lack of funds and a lack of incentives and concerns about the impact of OERs on staff roles.

“The biggest overhead is staff time, particularly in the new [higher education] economy ... it’s difficult once you get past the enthusiast.”

“The biggest problem is incentivisation.”

However, some participants expressed time-saving benefits they had identified in making teaching and learning resources available online. In one example, short films had been made to demonstrate technical processes:

“Educators use videos [online digital resources] to give additional support to students – some with access and time difficulties...these are a benefit to both staff and students.”

Benefits to staff accrue when students can be directed to resources to repeat information or reinforce learning.

Participants expressed concerns about the impact of OERs on staff roles:

“Threat to jobs ... the concerns over redundancy. [We wonder] whether this is a waste of effort.”

“Is it a replacement for what we do? We do what we do best...”

These points were discussed in the context of a rapidly changing HE culture, specifically in art, design and media, where funding, costs and staff security is being severely challenged.

11. Institutional Context – Profile, marketing and strategic support

“Management of content is very important.”

“... [there] are inherent costs in print, film and radio.”

“Quality is a big criteria here.”

“The great thing about standards is there are so many.”

11.1 Institutional profile and marketing

Participants in the group suggested that there are important benefits to institutions in articulating and communicating their practice through OERs in an increasingly competitive higher education market:

“There is competition in higher education now.”

One participant emphasised the financial costs of generating resources, particularly in regard to the accompanying costs with resources in media and creative arts subjects, and the need to consider sustainability through income generation.

“You need a return on your investment in the resource, it is important ... there are inherent costs in print, film and radio.”

Although the group considered the implications for developing OER practices through a costed model the same participant proposed the:

“Neon Iceberg Model...for example iTunes U ... the free resources being the attraction [with more useful materials] at a cost once you have investigated.”

11.2 Quality Assurance and sustainability

Participants articulated differing views on quality assurance issues associated with OERs reflecting perceptions of the role of OERs. “Carrier-bag solutions” may have ‘pedagogic quality’ but may not necessarily be deemed suitable for marketing purposes.

For participants considering chiefly external audiences, the cost of ensuring quality issues is deemed prohibitive:

“Quality is a big criteria here.”

“Management of content is very important again it’s down to cost.”

In contrast, some participants suggested that the costs of making valuable resources are less prohibitive where resources are designed for repurpose and reuse:

“The interesting part is reuse - if so it [the OER] doesn’t need to be polished.”

“It’s about making them suited to remix ... so not PDFs.”

It was noted that the development of open educational practice requires clarification of technical ‘standards’ employed and in this regard a range of tasks were identified by participants included investigating and drawing up guidelines (formatting, standards, metadata) for OER creation.

One participant raised health and safety issues and concerns about what would happen in the event of an online technical demonstration, for example, resulting in accident or injury.

11.3 Institutional Support

Several suggestions were made for initiating departmental approaches to open educational practice and the kinds of departmental and institutional support that may be required to drive the process forward. Suggestions include investigating existing OERs in the department, identifying existing areas of expertise, and engaging colleagues in further dialogue. Participants were keen to ensure that staff are engaged in discussions about the benefits, particularly pedagogic, of getting involved in open educational practice.

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 departmental / institutional key strategic goals and underpinning values and philosophy**
- **Embed the project Action Plan in the institution’s technology enhanced learning strategy.**

- **Provide opportunities for dialogue between academic and information technology staff to support art, design, & media pedagogies through appropriate online technologies.**
- **Explore available repositories and the potential for open access.**
- **Provide staff with appropriate IP and copyright guidance on issues associated with open educational resources through library and legal services and programme support. Explore Creative Commons licenses suited to staff needs and considerations.**
- **Schedule workshops which enable the showcasing of existing open educational practices in the department.**
- **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.**
- **Explore what types of teaching and learning resources are best suited to OER creation and use. What art, design and media pedagogies are best supported by OERs and open educational practice?**
- **Participants expressed concerns regarding the institutional motivations for the development of OERs in the existing HE economy. Clarification on the intended impact on current staff roles would support burgeoning open educational practice.**
- **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

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/oer-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>

Licenses - Creative Commons: <http://creativecommons.org/>

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>



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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 A

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