



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

**Department of Media, Film & Culture Arts, Leeds Trinity  
University College  
FOCUS GROUP REPORT**

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## Focus Group Report – Department of Media, Film & Culture, Leeds Trinity University College

### 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 – Department of Media, Film & Culture

**Participants:** 8 members of staff/2 students – Head of Department: Film, Media and culture, E-learning advisor, E-business, principle lecturers, Education Librarian

**Sub-disciplines represented:** Information Services, Business, Theatre Film, Media and Culture, 3<sup>rd</sup> Film and Media students, staff member with expertise in education in Second Life

## 7. Valuable Resources

- YouTube (a loophole in the online copyright system)
- Facebook
- Moodle
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- “Any resource that accommodates different learning styles.”
- Library
- Google
- Books
- Films
- DVDs-VHS
- Students

## 8. Technology

*“... make Moodle open source.”*

*“... there is potential in exploring 3D and the virtual classroom with enrolled students [distance learning] ... “*

Participants indicated that they use a broad range of digital resources and platforms in their teaching and research. Several participants also envisioned the potential for educational use of tools such as Second Life:

“Virtual worlds – there is potential in exploring 3D and the virtual classroom with enrolled students [distance learning], staff avatars who can offer guidance and tuition when they are available.”

Participants spoke of the institutional virtual learning environment, Moodle, which is currently used to house teaching and learning resources for use by existing students. In some instances, these resources are also accessible using a guest login. Participants suggested that the development of open access to the VLE has the potential to attract students to the institution:

“How are we going to get them through the doors? Make Moodle open source.”

## 9. Intellectual Property and Copyright

*“...the students are well developed in this – countering plagiarism.”*

*“I’m worried about revealing too much.”*

Participants spoke of the benefits of openly sharing teaching and learning resources in terms of the development of academic and institutional profiles and reputation:

“There are benefits in attribution ... share but credit.”

One participant believed the metadata accompanying open educational resources offered clear benefits to the producers regarding their subsequent use and reuse:

“The value of OERs is in citations [attribution].”

Participants aligned the development of open educational practice, including attribution, with the development of student research skills:

“We have a good referencing system – the students are well developed in this – countering plagiarism.”

However, alongside this, participants expressed a concern about the impact of infinite repurposing:

“I worry about the ‘wiki effect’ where everything becomes so adapted that there is a loss of confidence in the validity and authority in the information available online.”

One participant referred to peer-to-peer file-sharing and associated this with open educational practices likening the development of OERs to:

*“An educational version of torrents ... my research which is often very close to my teaching, how open do I want it to be? I’m worried about revealing too much.”*

## 10. Pedagogic Cultures & Practices

*“... we use the [VLE] system, and try not to over-regulate if possible.”*

*“I use [OERs] .... to ensure I’m on track.”*

*“We’ve used blogs in assessments ... “*

*“...[we need] to make sure we added depth to that network engagement.”*

*“ ... you follow the links on the page and it takes you off [at tangents].” [Media student]*

### 10.1 Definitions and the role of OERs

Participants suggested OERs offer a range of benefits and associated ‘open educational resources’ with the values of the Open University, specifically the practice of ‘sharing’ and culture of ‘access’, ‘information’ and ‘ideas’. The group suggested that OERS are valuable in the development of tutors own teaching resources. One participant associated the phrase with “Inspiration – a starting point for my own resources.”

However, the group as a whole believed the resources true value is in the context of face-to-face staff teaching and the resources “won’t make sense if you’ve missed the lecture”. The students in the group, although familiar with using digital materials and blog sites in their learning, acknowledged the important staff role in using such resources, in their words: “the difficulties of navigating the wealth of material” that was open to them.

One participant believed OERs are confronting the corporate hold on information and this is made palpable in the creative commons license which is:

*“Challenging the giants and making content more freely available.”*

One participant articulated a taxonomy of staff responses to open educational practice as follows:

*“There seems to be three categories of staff responses to this: those who address in terms of intellectual property and recognition – how the resources will be used; those who fear for a loss of their role and employment – threatened by open access resources which challenge their traditional teaching function as gatekeeper and transmitter of knowledge; and those who believe it is amazing and want to see what can be achieved when no one is concerned with taking credit.”*

## 10.2 Using and creating open educational resources

Staff participants presented several examples of open educational resources they had created and the platforms used to share them. In particular, participants presented details of the institution's virtual learning environment, Moodle, which has an open-access element:

"We use Moodle, as the VLE system, and try not to over-regulate if possible. A lot of the content is freely available. The login as guest is not restricted and anyone can enter and look at the resources."

A participant showed examples of the resources available from a film course at the institution.

Another participant spoke of using SlideShare to both share presentations and to inform the development of teaching resources.

"I upload my PowerPoints to SlideShare (<http://www.slideshare.net/>) ... I seek advice – how many slides will I need for a two hour lecture? It helps structure my teaching."

One participant noted that the subject area, in this case media, had implications for the available content online, and the access to resources:

"We're teaching film so it is understandable that there has been a growth of online presence of materials".

Staff participants talked about using openly available educational resources as a benchmark for, and to inform, development of their own teaching practice.

"I use [OERs] to compare my teaching, to ensure I'm on track."

One participant spoke about their experience of distance learning and of the value of the interaction around the 'learning resources'. This example broadened discussion about what an open educational resource can be to include resources (blog posts, for example) produced by the students themselves:

"I did a postgraduate course with a group of other academics from around the world and used conferencing, not Skype, it was valuable but we needed to make sure we added depth to that network engagement".

"We've used blogs in assessments, as a medium ... getting students to upload Word documents, it was very informal which was essential."

One participant expressed reservations over the increased use of network technology in education, believing greater consideration should be given to its value and function:

"Blogs need to be relevant ... most people on the web are lurkers ... people rush to use the web – blogs – but they are not sure why they are using it."

Two student participants in the focus group spoke about their use of digital resources and experience of the digital ecology. They talked about the difficulties of navigating the wealth of material and of their reliance on friends and tutors in helping them identify appropriate resources:

“Other than friends (on the course) we rely on our teachers. We can use Google but you get a million results so we need guidance from them.”

“Tutors point us in a certain direction ... it can be distracting, you follow the links on the page and it takes you off [at tangents].”

One student talked of the value of the digital platform, YouTube, to his study in film:

“We’ve never used YouTube as much until last week with our film assignment – YouTube is so vast. At first it was a social tool but then it’s become a practical tool for study ... it’s like a university itself.”

One student talked about the value of having access to previous students’ work. However, this was expressed alongside concerns about their own ability to ‘judge’ and a fear of plagiarism.

“Seeing work of the previous year is useful ... to help see what standard is expected of us”.

“There’s a danger of plagiarism, so we don’t share to regularly, and we wouldn’t really look at other student work – it doesn’t have the authority, we don’t know if the work is any good.”

The institutional virtual learning environment, is considered a valuable resource but it was not considered interactive nor value for money:

“It’s good to have flexibility in learning through Moodle but there’s too much on there – you can miss lectures and go and look at the resources but we need the interaction, the views of other people. I like the lectures ... we paid a lot of money for this [education].”

### 10.3 Impacts on teaching and the student experience

Participants highlighted a number of positive impacts of the online ecology generally and social networking tools specifically on teaching and the student experience. These impacts included maintaining the currency of learning materials, and opportunities for networking and collaboration.

However, several participants spoke of retaining some control over digital resources in order to maintain existing teaching and learning practice.

“They should give a taster not the complete thing – students should want to come here – there is a danger of developing self-learners [they miss the context]”.

“I don’t put up my lecture slides on Moodle straight away – 3 or 4 weeks later – works with lecture attendance.”

One participant drew a strong distinction between the learning experience of the “lecture” and the associated resources.

“Won’t make sense if you’ve missed the lecture.”

Facebook, specifically, is used as a distance-learning tool and as a means of developing professional profiles:

“I use Facebook as a way of getting references from other academics.”

“I’ve done tutorials through Facebook – share and collaborate”

However one participant was concerned about the implications of a convergence of professional and social roles when using social networking sites in higher education.

“I’ve retreated from Facebook for engaging with students, there are issues.”

Generally, the development of open educational practice is deemed to provide a foundation on which to build more collaborative ways of working:

“They can open up channels ... provide the potential to collaborate.”

#### 10.4 Time and Work

Participants spoke of the time-saving potential of using openly available educational resources for the purposes of enriching student learning. However, this is set alongside the time required to produce OERs.

“Don’t want to waste time reinventing the wheel – I collect hits [resources] and upload to Moodle – ‘more for less’.”

“We need to use funds to negotiate time to produce OERs.”

### 11. Institutional Context – Profile, marketing and strategic support

*“We need to identify the aims ...”*

*“We need to involve the graduates.”*

*“[There are] three levels of audience...”*

*“We need ... systems in place.”*

*"They can raise staff and university profile."*

*"We are outward facing - show what we do"*

### 11.1 Institutional profile and marketing

Participants suggested that the development of open educational practice has significant value in terms of marketing and raising staff and institutional profiles. It was felt that using OERs to support the institution's profile would make it more competitive:

*"We're a small campus that can position itself on a world stage."*

Participants suggested that "showing what we do" has real potential for attracting students to the institution:

*"Use for open days, online prospectus – use links."*

One participant highlighted the different audiences for open educational practice and the need for clarity about the department's aims in undertaking this work:

*"[There are] three levels [of audience]: Public (marketing); our students and other educators."*

*"We need to identify the aims, what is most important ... for me it is attracting new applicants."*

### 11.2 Quality Assurance and sustainability

Participants did not identify quality assurance and sustainability issues directly during the discussion. However, issues of pedagogic quality were explored in relation to the appropriateness of various approaches to technology-supported learning (see above), and concerns about technical quality are implicit in participants' suggested need for staff development in the processes of OER creation, for example, the digitization of resources.

### 11.3 Institutional Support

Several participants suggested that clarification of the department's aims and motivations for developing open educational practice is a priority:

*"We need to identify the aims, what is most important ..."*

Participants suggested that achievement of the ambition to open up access to the virtual learning environment would require a good deal of institutional, particularly technical, support:

“Staff need training in skills required for resource creation and digitisation, Flash, etc.”

“Identify skills and expertise inside and outside the department.”

Participants deemed the involvement of students and graduate students important to the process:

“We need to involve the graduates.”

While participants comments suggest it is important to maintain a balance between institutional ‘regulation’ and staff ‘autonomy’, in the context of a more wholesale push towards open education:

“We need external and internal systems in place.”

## 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.**
- **Explore ways in which open educational practice can align with the development of the institutional and departmental profile.**
- **Embed the project Action Plan in the institution’s technology enhanced learning strategy.**
- **Support staff research methods with regard to online materials. Encourage staff and students in the critical engagement with online materials.**
- **Schedule workshops which enable the showcasing of existing open educational practices in the department (for example Film course resources) and other online initiatives (for example student portfolios – Degree Show.ME).**

- **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?**
- **Provide opportunities for dialogue between academic and information technology staff to support art, design, & media pedagogies through appropriate online technologies.**
- **Identify skills gaps to enable wider staff involvement in the creation and use of OERs.**
- **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 ways in which existing repositories (Moodle) can be developed to support more explicitly open access.**
- **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.**
- **Address staff concerns regarding attribution - 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.**
- **Explore the potential for the development of resources through curriculum and assessment design.**
- **Eventually a clear OER policy statement that encompasses staff motivations and aspirations will help sustain 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](mailto:robert.robertson@strath.ac.uk)



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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>



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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 B

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