



Session Name: Open Educational Resources – you get what you pay for, or do you?

Description:

Open Educational Resources are a way for the academic industry to share teaching methods and teaching objects. Technology enables this effort through high bandwidth networks, cloud storage, and open standards in Learning Management Systems. This effort is further enabled by licensing support from Creative Commons and leadership from the US Department of Education.

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FERRAN FERRER, Núria; MINGUILLÓN ALFONSO, Julià; PASCUAL SOL, Mireia. (2007). Open Educational Practices and Resources: OLCOS Roadmap 2012. European Commission, eLearning Programme. ISBN: 3-902448-08-3
http://www.olcos.org/cms/upload/docs/olcos_roadmap.pdf

The European Digital Library as a flagship venture

At present, the most significant European venture in open access is the European Digital Library initiative, which was proposed in April 2005 by the Heads of State and of Government of France, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Poland and Spain. This was understood by many observers to be in reaction to the Google Print Library Project which has the ambitious aim of digitally scanning millions of books from the collections of major American libraries and making them searchable online via Google's search engine.

This raised concerns about the ever-increasing dominance of the English language on the Internet and in global culture. Consequently, 19 national libraries of EU Member States immediately after the proposal announced their support of the European Digital Library venture. The aim is to digitise on a large scale and make accessible on the Internet works that belong to the European intellectual and cultural heritage.

As currently only a fraction of the cultural collections in the Member States is digitised, the European Commission in August 2006 adopted a recommendation that calls on the EU Member States to set up large-scale digitisation facilities to speed up the digitisation and online accessibility of the material. It is considered that by 2008 two million books, films, photographs, manuscripts and other cultural works will be accessible through the European Digital Library, and by 2010 the volume should have grown to at least six million. But, in 2010 the volume is expected to be much higher as, by then, potentially every library, archive and museum in Europe will be able to link its digital content to the European Digital Library. (cf. Europa.eu 2006; Commission of the European Communities 2006)

An industry view on future digital content business models

Timo Ruikka from Nokia Corporation expects new digital content business models to emerge that build on decreasing costs of content and high flexibility services that will provide consumers with a continuous stream of their preferred selection of content.

For these benefits, customers would accept that they are not allowed a freely copiable and transferable personal copy. “In fact, I expect the prices to go down so far that users will consume content like they consume electricity: without thinking how much a minute costs but turning it off when finished... Also, the flexibility will be in the incredible selection (...) and in the tailoring to changing needs and tastes: having a constantly updated top 100 songs in your pocket is flexibility even if you cannot transfer any of those tracks to another device”. (Ruikka 2005)

It seems that such models are already feasible for learning services, yet without the limitations in reusability considered for content such as the “top 100 songs”. Even today learners can subscribe to a variety of free RSS feeds selected according to themes of study interest.

Schaffert, Sandra and Geser, Guntram (2008). Open Educational Resources and Practices. eLearning Papers, No 7. ISSN 1887–1542. www.elearningpapers.eu

OER can make a significant contribution (...). However, OER do not automatically lead to quality, efficiency and cost-effectiveness; much depends on the procedures put in place. The transformative educational potential of OER depends on:

1. Improving the quality of learning materials through peer review processes;
2. Reaping the benefits of contextualisation, personalisation and localisation;
3. Emphasising openness and quality improvement;
4. Building capacity for the creation and use of OER as part of the professional development of academic staff;
5. Serving the needs of particular student populations such as those with special needs;
6. Optimising the deployment of institutional staff and budgets;
7. Serving students in local languages;
8. Involving students in the selection and adaptation of OER in order to engage them more actively in the learning process; and
9. Using locally developed materials with due acknowledgement.

The transformative potential of OER also includes the benefits of sharing and collaborating among institutions and countries, and the creatively disruptive role of OER in opening up new educational models.