Making Academic OER Easy: Reflections on Technology and Openness at Oxford University

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Abstract

Due to its stringent entry requirements, academic reputation and world ranking, Oxford University in the United Kingdom is perceived by some as being a closed, exclusive, and elitist institution. As learning technologists working in the institution, we have experienced an enthusiasm amongst academic colleagues for openness in publication and practice enhanced by new technologies, which reflects their long-demonstrated commitment to publication and the dissemination of new knowledge. Advances in digital technologies and the emergence of online platforms for global dissemination have enabled Oxford University seminars, lectures, and public addresses, many by famous figures, to be shared with an international audience. This article charts the journey Oxford has made in opening up educational content and describes the ways in which we have worked to ensure that the value added by technology aligns with current academic practice in the institution.

Keywords: education; distance education; e-learning; flexible learning; open education; open learning; online learning; blended learning; technology-enhanced learning

Introduction

In keeping with this issue's theme of opening up previously closed environments, this case study of Oxford University's involvement in recent open educational resources (OER) projects provides an opportunity to reflect on the factors driving the success of open educational content. The authors hope that this paper will contribute to the small, yet fast-growing body of knowledge on the topic of OER creation, sharing, and use, and thus broaden the base on which future meta-analyses can build.

An Oxford education offers an exciting combination of privilege and open-mindedness. Oxford University is a complex institution with characteristics and traditions established over 900 years. Staff and students work in a closed physical environment—shaped by gates, lodges, cloisters, walled gardens, and private quadrangles. The business of the university, however, is characterised by a deep commitment to publication, communication, and the dissemination of new knowledge. In traditional modes of education the university has established a reputation for excellence, having one of the oldest and largest university presses and a continuing education department of international renown. A commitment to public dissemination of knowledge is not new—its roots are in the university extension movement more than a century ago:

> In the late 19th century Oxford was one of the pioneers of the university extension movement, which enabled audiences around the UK to hear what some of its lecturers had to say on a wide range of topics. The OpenSpires project [see later in this paper] is the 21st-century equivalent, though, with the benefit of the web, the audiences are now global and we hope even more diverse. It is a pleasure to contribute to this important venture, which is opening up Oxford like never before (McDonald, n.d.).

As discussed in this paper, new technologies have made it possible to further lower the barriers to accessing that knowledge, allowing us to "[r]etain our original mission of making the scholarship of the University accessible to wider audiences" (Michie, 2011, para. 1).

On most evenings during term time there are research seminars and talks across the university that attract small but interested audiences. Much of the teaching provision is based on traditional methods of small-group or one-to-one discussion. This paper does not attempt to delve into much historical detail or describe Oxford teaching, but focuses on trends in attitudes towards technology-enhanced learning in our own experience at this and other institutions, and the shifts in thinking and practice which have occurred during our recent OpenSpires and other OER initiatives. First we discuss some historical themes concerning the barriers to widespread academic 'buy-in' for learning technology activities, and then we explore some of the developments (internal and external to the institution) which brought about new opportunities and changes in attitudes and behaviour. The significant OER projects completed at Oxford are described, and the continuing support for sustainability and embedding such initiatives into educational practice is discussed.

Recent developments are foregrounded against our reflection on historical trends and changing attitudes to copyright, sharing, collaborative production, and reuse of learning materials. Having started with the production of free and publicly available podcasts on iTunes U in 2008, Oxford University now produces open educational content on an institution-wide scale. Various studies funded by JISC[1] (Mansell, Wilson, Robinson & Highton, 2010; Geng, Marshall & Wilson, 2011) have evaluated our OER activity as being successful. This success is a result of adopting a devolved model of content production which reflects the collegiate nature of the institution and provides a clear workflow process for departmental support staff. Hence it is easy for academic staff to become involved in the process, and to require minimal support. Oxford University's OER material is free for reuse in education worldwide and is clearly labelled with a Creative Commons licence. All material is syndicated through RSS and made freely available in UK subject centre portals, the UK national OER repository JorumOpen (http://www.jorum.ac.uk), and the Oxford University podcasts site (http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk).

Set in stone

The challenges for learning technology managers and leaders have always been in defining the place technology should take in a university's teaching and learning strategy to best meet the needs of a particular institution, and in identifying and putting in place the mechanisms to encourage academic buy-in. Accordingly, any strategy that effectively encourages the uptake of OER must be informed by original thinking and reflection about the culture of the organisation and lessons learned in other places.

Working as learning technologists during the 1990s, we regularly encountered two barriers which limited the extent to which we could support colleagues in making materials available online: technical difficulties and concern over loss of ownership of content. The Microsoft Scholars project lists 15 major factors which inhibit the uptake by academic staff of technology-

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[1] JISC: Joint Information Systems Committee, UK: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/

enhanced teaching and learning. One of the factors is "[u]ncertainty of intellectual property rights in an electronic environment" (Microsoft Scholars project, 1997, cited by Newton, 2003, p. 413). That finding, in 1997, contributes to our historical lens, focusing on 'then' and 'now'.

Off-the-shelf electronic learning materials such as computer-based training tutorials, multimedia tutorials and simulations on CD-Rom have been available for more than two decades, as described in the seminal text book by Alessi and Trollip (1985). Although learning technologists (also called instructional designers) at various universities, who were involved in the design and development of such interactive multimedia, formed communities of practice and suggested the idea of sharing some of their outputs, they were met with resistance—academics tended to prefer to 'do it themselves'. However, two decades ago it was not easy for academics to develop their own computer-based education materials.

At Oxford, teaching is largely delivered to small groups. Tutors and supervisors meet their students regularly to give one-to-one guidance for a highly personalised learning experience, so there has been some reluctance to use electronic learning materials that are commercially available, or have been created and built at other institutions or by other academics. As a result, learning technologists, here and at other face-to-face institutions, continued to design and develop customised, one-off, low-impact, labour-intensive multimedia tutorials of limited sustainability. Time- and labour-intensive authoring packages were used to design and develop interactive tutorials. A rule of thumb often quoted (eLearning Guild, 2002) was that it took a learning technologist around 100 hours to develop one hour of courseware at a basic level (i.e. not involving complexities such as simulations). Such tutorials were then 'set in stone', and were not easy to adapt or modify. Indeed, when an academic who had commissioned their 'pet' project left the institution, the materials were found to be so tied to the person or institution that use and adoption of the electronic tutorial usually came to an abrupt end, and the electronic asset rapidly fell into disrepair. Large distance education providers such as the Open University, whose core business depends on is self-study learning materials, found solutions in a more industrial model of production, with an entire section of their labour force dedicated to the production of courseware, learning resources, and activities.

Even when the internet made it possible to update and share materials more easily, academics were understandably reluctant to expose their own learning materials (such as slideshows) on departmental or library websites. In our experience, it was not uncommon for an academic to attend a conference and find some of their own slides appearing in a student presentation. In the late 1990s, the prevailing academic ethos was one of tight ownership of intellectual property, and society at large had not yet engaged with the idea of openness and due acknowledgement. Using virtual learning environments (VLEs) and learning management systems (LMSs) became increasingly popular as a way to restrict access to teaching materials.

Material released on the internet in the 1990s was considered by many to be in the public domain and available to be used in any way. Copyright information and advice was not widely included in online learning materials or resources such as images—and when it was, it was often difficult for a lay user to understand. This added to uncertainty amongst academics (Microsoft Scholars project, 1997, cited by Newton, 2003, p. 413) and the fear of inadvertently infringing copyright—they often inserted third-party materials into their lessons or presentations in the belief that it was acceptable since it was 'in the public domain', for 'educational purposes' and for a 'limited audience'. But sharing such materials with the whole world is a different story, and the concerns of academics clearly needed to be addressed. Openly licensed materials go a long way to ease concerns about both sharing one's own intellectual property, and using that of others.

Beginning to open up

Bissell and Boyle (2007) take us back 20 years and challenge an internet novice to predict which will come first: open, electronic encyclopaedias; open-source software development; or a vast network of free and open education resources. Indeed, all three phenomena have materialised, and we focus here on the opening up of universities' approaches to sharing and distributing educational content during the decade since MIT launched their Open Courseware initiative (MIT, 2011). The OECD report "Giving Knowledge for Free" (OECD, 2007) refers to the "apparently extraordinary trend" (p. 9) that is emerging, and reports why this is happening, who is involved, and what the most important implications are.

Two major developments seem to have contributed to this open and 'free knowledge' approach (Lane & McAndrew, 2010). First, in the late 1990s early forms of open licenses started to emerge as a spin-off from the concept of open-source software (Wiley & Gurrell, 2009) and in response to the incompatibility of the traditional forms of copyright with the nature of, and philosophy behind, the World Wide Web. Second, the recent advent of Web 2.0 technologies has considerably changed the patterns of use of the web from one-way broadcasting to participatory information sharing and collaboration. Since then, a plethora of easy-to-use digital technologies has been developed that allow academics to produce and share educational content in a variety of formats.

Early attempts at internet-based approaches in the 1980s and early 1990s superseded correspondence education, which was the first level in Taylor's (2001) five-generation model. Correspondence education consisted of written study guides, telephonic communication, the occasional audio-cassette tape, and a long wait for postal feedback on an assignment. Advances in digital media, such as usability improvements in commercial software packages and the availability of free software, now mean that academics can easily record audio commentaries on slideshows or audio feedback to students. Audio and video podcasts can be recorded with entry-level, handheld devices, and can then be made available easily through institutional VLEs. The challenge now lies in bringing simple, easy-to-use digital technologies closer to academic staff in scalable ways across large institutions while retaining that 'do it yourself' feeling, and to showcase their usefulness in enhancing both academic practice and the student learning experience.

The term *open education resources* was first used in 2002 during a UNESCO workshop on open courseware in developing countries (UNESCO, 2011). There are a number of different definitions of OER which share some fundamental values: namely, that learning resources are licensed for unrestricted distribution and offer the possibility of adaptation, improvement, and reuse.

The *Cape Town Declaration* defines open educational resources as "openly licensed course materials, lesson plans, textbooks, games, software and other materials that support teaching and learning" (Open Society Institute, 2007, para. 3). It goes on to state that these resources should be "... freely shared through open licenses which facilitate use, revision, translation, improvement and sharing by anyone" (ibid., para. 8). At Oxford, we use the following definition of OER: "…teaching, learning and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property licence that permits their free use or re-purposing by others" (Atkins, Brown & Hammond, 2007: p. 4, quoted by White & Manton, 2011; Masterman & Wild, 2011).

Taking a historical view, it is important to place current OER practice in the context of previous initiatives towards re-useable learning objects. Lane and McAndrew (2010) argue that open licensing and the expansion of digital technologies "seem to be enabling OER to have wider

acceptance into individual and institutional practice" (p. 952) compared with learning objects (LO) which appeared in the early 2000s. Although both LO and OER are "fairly recent and interrelated" (ibid., p. 953) and they raise similar issues around "accessibility, discoverability, granularity and reusability" (ibid., p. 955), OER are much closer to teachers' everyday practice. This development is due mainly to recent technological and social developments such as the proliferation of online communities and social networks created around user-generated content, and greater use of digital technologies for learning, both inside and outside the classroom. Also, OER explicitly address teachers' concerns about the issues of plagiarism and copyright infringement already mentioned in this paper. Both Lane and McAndrew (2010, p. 960) and Casey (2011) argue that the power of OER to become a trigger for change in current educational practice lies in the fact that they focus less on individuals and ways to optimise their teaching practice, which was the main motivation behind LO. Instead, the involvement with OER and the concept of openness raises "systemic and soft issues (such as institutional tradition, structures and cultures)" (Casey, 2011, p.1), and invites reconsideration of existing approaches to education.

An early landmark in Oxford's commitment to OER was the university's decision to offer a flexible, locally developed VLE. To ensure that the decisions about openness remained with the institution rather than a commercial software provider, Oxford University selected an open-source software platform for our virtual learning environment in 2005. Lee (2008) describes how the principle of openness dictated the choice. He argues that the technical barriers to opening up education are probably the easiest to overcome, but are not to be underestimated. The next step was to support opening what he refers to as 'cultural gates'; that is, encouraging academics to share materials. To better understand academic attitudes towards the sharing and use of educational resources, Masterman and Lee (2005) conducted a small study with lecturers in English literature across three universities: Oxford University, Oxford Brookes University, and the University of Leicester. The study revealed that "academics are willing to release their material if they are a) protected from litigation; b) protected from criticism; c) given an incentive to do so; and d) furthering their discipline" (Lee, 2008, p. 57).

Online and free

Although there had been some OER activity amongst small groups or individuals in the University, Oxford's first institution-wide release of learning materials online was in October 2008 when we launched our online collection of podcasts and corresponding iTunes U site.[2] By this time podcasting was becoming increasingly well known as a social and mobile technology for news and entertainment, and academic colleagues seemed ready to become involved, as long as the technical, legal, and reputational factors were addressed by the central technical, legal, and marketing teams. The success of this initiative can be seen in the volume of materials currently flowing from academic departments and colleges. Oxford University currently has over 3000 audio and video podcasts from all subject areas, free to download for personal use. The material has been provided by high-profile academics and features talks, interviews, lectures, and panel discussions. Oxford has experienced considerable success with its podcasting website and iTunes U presence—since the launch in 2008 the number of downloads has reached 14 million; there are over 2700 published items in total, several of which regularly reach the top ten; and at least three podcasts have reached number one in the global download charts.

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[2] Oxford Podcasts: http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/ and iTunes U: http://itunes.ox.ac.uk

Increasingly open

Although the trend towards sharing open-source software has been strong at Oxford for a number of years, the university's engagement with OER is mainly the result of a recent initiative funded by the UK HEFCE[3] and managed jointly by the Higher Education Academy and JISC. The overall role of this initiative for the uptake of OER in United Kingdom higher education institutions is not to be underestimated—since 2009, HEFCE-funded OER projects have resulted in the release of a large body of openly licensed educational materials across the United Kingdom, the creation of institutional strategies and workflows for the production of OER, and a clearer understanding of benefits and challenges of sharing OER (McGill, Beetham, Falconer & Littlejohn, 2010; 2011).

OpenSpires

As we built on the success of the Oxford podcasts collection, it became clear to the central Learning Technologies Group that a sustainable process was required to formalise the creation and maintenance of such collections. The OpenSpires[4] project was part of the institutional strand of the first call under the *JISC Open Educational Resources (OER) Programme (OER1)*. The aim was to assess and report on the implications of a research-led institution releasing OER on a large scale, by addressing the concerns of licensing, litigation, criticism, and impact.

OpenSpires set out to release educational audio and video content as OER, making it free for "reuse and redistribution by third parties globally, provided it is used in a non-commercial way and attributed to its creator" (Mansell, Wilson, Robinson & Highton, 2010, p. 5). The project aimed to "support academic content creators in the production of these materials and in the change of practice required to make informed decisions about releasing their material as OER" (ibid.). OpenSpires provided us with the opportunity to explore with academic colleagues their perceptions of intellectual property rights and associated issues, and their position of comfort in relation to new media platforms.

Content generated during the life of the OpenSpires project reflects the academic activity of the university by focusing on audio-visual recordings of research seminars and talks, and supporting resources. The university already had a cost-effective content creation process in place, resulting from the investment made to present Oxford materials in iTunes U and because there was already a steady flow of this material being created every day. Our assets are unique, 'born digital' and licensed at source with sign-off from the head of the relevant academic department.

We adopted a devolved model of content production which provides a clear workflow process for department support staff to follow, thus minimising academic support time. We chose a clear, well-defined format for audio and video recordings to reduce the demands on academics, to standardise workflows, and to reduce the costs of production. Where possible, we provided advice and guidance on the best format for the recording—for example, video, screencast, or audio only—so that the subject matter is represented in the best way possible.

One of the outputs from the OpenSpires project was the commitment by Oxford University Computing Services to provide a continuing service, based on a set of sustainable policies on workflow and storage, and an agreed open-licensing process that allows departments from across the university to regularly publish high-quality open content for global reuse. Academics have challenged us, as they should, but we have been able to support them in making informed choices about content they wish to produce, the licensing they wish it to carry, and the platforms on

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[3] HEFCE: Higher Education Funding Council for England: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/

[4] OpenSpires: http://openspires.oucs.ox.ac.uk

which it is published. In the first year, more than 150 Oxford academic podcasters and visiting speakers donated material to support their subject communities. Each contributor signs a Creative Commons licence that allows their material to be promoted for reuse in education world-wide.

We worked closely with the institutional marketing team and developed a clear communication strategy to improve the discoverability of the digitised material, thus leading to consistently high download figures. We were able to provide reports and usage statistics, and many academic colleagues have received positive email feedback directly from learners and listeners:

> Receiving email feedback is great—you don't get much feedback from within the university so to receive it from listeners around the globe is great.

Once a flow of OER materials from within the university was established, we began to consider how our materials could be clustered alongside materials from other higher education providers. The community of practice at Oxford is shaped and defined by shared history, tradition, and repertoire. We argue that (in the context of Oxford) the primary unit of change is not the individual or the institution, but the informal 'communities' which academics form within colleges as they pursue shared endeavours over time. During our OER projects we explored a range of ways to support change and agency in those communities by working with small groups and local support staff to develop skills in digital media, and to identify events that would yield assets (recordings) of high value and widespread interest.

In 2010 Oxford was awarded funding for two more projects to work with neighbouring institutions to understand their own institutional implications and to investigate local solutions for sustainable OER release. The Ripple project[5] involved Harper Adams University College and Oxford Brookes University, and the Triton Project[6] ran jointly with Cambridge University. Together we considered opportunities for new scholarship and how OER provides another dissemination mechanism for research, extended reach, and public engagement. The outcomes of these projects were, in turn, the release of more OER materials and some local institutional change, as shown by the following comments from workshop participants:

> The value lies in direct influence on infrastructure and processes. … The project has accelerated the pace of development both on workflows and infrastructure for wider scale release of OER.

> … Ripple has helped us to identify the need to place a strategic emphasis on identifying suitable OERs at programme level as part of curriculum development and review, and on … the reasons for doing OER and its relevance to us.

Listening for impact

In 2005, academic colleagues reported their wish to be protected from litigation, protected from criticism, given an incentive, and supported in furthering their discipline (Lee, 2008, p. 57). By 2011 Oxford University had built up a collection of over 3000 podcasts, a third of which are licensed as OER. New questions began to arise. It became necessary to step back and assess the effect of the resources on the people who had been accessing them: "What kind of information do learners want?" "What have they gained from using the resources?" We thus embarked on another project designed to assess and measure impact. Various analyses were conducted, both quantitative and qualitative, including a news and media analysis of publicity that had already been generated about Oxford podcasts, and an investigation of email messages and informal

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[5] http://openspires.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ripple

[6] http://openspires.oucs.ox.ac.uk/triton

feedback. A series of surveys were conducted, including customised questionnaires to departments and students, and questions inserted in regular surveys for new students (Geng, Marshall & Wilson, 2011). Key findings show that Oxford podcasts are popular globally, and their popularity is growing; Oxford podcasts benefit both current student and external learners and teachers; a fair portion (15%) of accesses comes directly from mobile devices. We worked hard to analyse the large volume of traffic on the Apple iTunes U site, to make local improvements (including a dedicated *Oxford Podcasts* tool within our VLE), and to build better search and landing pages for each podcast series on the Oxford podcasts web portal (ibid.).

At the same time, Oxford hosted a national OER Impact Study,[7] also funded by JISC, to investigate the use and re-use of OER in teaching and learning in higher education in the United Kingdom. The results show that there is growing interest amongst academic staff in using OER to support their teaching and learning practice, and that digital literacy skills are key to success (Masterman & Wild, 2011). Digital literacy skills include knowing where to find appropriate resources, how to evaluate their fitness for purpose, how to evaluate their quality, and how to adapt them to suit one's own teaching context. However, whether a person decides to engage with OER in the first place depends largely on their beliefs about teaching and learning and their general disposition towards sharing and reuse (Masterman & Wild, 2011; Masterman, Wild, White, & Manton, 2011). One of the success factors uncovered by the OER Impact Study is the role played by provenance—the quality and reputation of the producing institution play an important role in the use of OER from that institution; that is, materials produced by higher education institutions have a certain 'stamp of quality' for their users (Masterman & Wild, 2011, p. 20).

Then and now

According to Browne, Holding, Howell, and Rodway-Dyer (2010), "[w]ithout academic buy-in OER has no future" (p. 5). Indeed, slow adoption of educational technology amongst academics (for a variety of reasons) is well known (Fresen, 2011). What has changed in the intervening years, in terms of academic buy-in and advances in digital media? The maturation of Creative Commons licensing and platforms for global dissemination have resulted in a reduction of intellectual property and technical barriers. What about reputation, reward, and links to teaching practice? If an activity is to be sustainable beyond initial seed funding, academic colleagues need to feel motivated to continue to contribute.

Our projects have demonstrated that, with some consultation and discussion, academics seem to be remarkably open to the idea of creating and releasing OER. The intrinsic rewards are demonstrated by these comments, gathered during our academic staff surveys within the OpenSpires project:

> Releasing podcasts suited my subject (Censorship). I was keen to disseminate my material as widely as possible, particularly as my work involves releasing previously secret documents.

> I feel my job is to disseminate our knowledge and enthusiasm for our subject as widely as possible—this is why I support Creative Commons.

> It's a huge personal boost to receive feedback. As a teacher it is just what you want to hear.

Examples of the positive feedback received by individual Oxford academics from users of their podcasts include:

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[7] http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning/oer2/oerimpact.aspx

> I have recently enrolled in the [......] University with the plan to complete a BA in Philosophy, but the first unit I have had to complete is a Study Skills unit which has been so boring and mundane I have been questioning whether to continue or not. Your enthusiasm for philosophy is infectious and put me back on course to continue my studies. Thanks again.

> Can I just say how utterly engrossing they are—and how completely stimulating. I completed my undergraduate studies a great number of years ago, but listening to you lecture makes me yearn for study.

> For retired people like me podcasts of lectures (recorded raw, not dressed up as some have them, complete with distracting background music) are a boon. Lifelong learning!

> Our more able students are being encouraged to listen to the podcasts both to improve their understanding of the plays and to encourage them to believe that Oxford is not a rarefied and unattainable target, but operates at a level they will find accessible.

> As head of 'More Able and Talented' at a large state school, I am constantly looking for resources to improve our teaching and your podcasts are giving us just that opportunity. Members of the English department are now using Wittgenstein's Dabbit illustration in the way you did and finding it to be a very effective approach.

> Thank you for offering online your lectures on introductory quantum mechanics, and thank you for providing a PDF copy of your text. The text is a marvellous resource, and your lectures are exceptionally lucid and compelling. I am learning a great deal and enjoying them very much. I teach high school science and maths, and I hope I can pass along to my students (at least some of) these ideas with the same excitement and clarity.

Each year the university rewards teaching innovation and colleagues who podcast their content, particularly if they have been actively involved in producing and crafting OER. These awards lend increased coverage and profile to the activity. While we recognise that it is important to celebrate success and innovation, for the sake of sustainability we also hope that this activity will become embedded in everyday academic practice. Evidence that OER production is already happening can be seen in the following comments received from some of the academic colleagues we worked with:

> Recording my lectures has become a routine part of my life—I have slightly adapted my style now that recordings are released because I used to refer to handouts a lot but then I got inundated with email requests for the handouts from listeners.

> I'm now linking podcasts to a new online course and they can be used as marketing materials to attract people to the course.

> I will be using podcast interviews as source material for my next book.

These comments also hint at the general skills development and increasing open-content literacy of staff who are now confident in using technology and understand how their materials are being used. The concerns about licensing, litigation, and reputation remain, but the technology barriers seem to have diminished. With the changing landscape of higher education, and an ever-growing number of high-quality OERs being produced and made freely available, there is growing recognition within institutions and among academics that effective teaching can produce quantifiable, valuable, and reusable outputs (McGill et al., 2011) that can enjoy international recognition.

Although the values and underpinnings of the OER movement are strong and the availability of open educational content is increasing, its use and reuse is still hampered by lack of awareness of the concept of OER, lack of knowledge of where to search for OER, and the uneven saturation of resources in different disciplines (Masterman & Wild, 2011). Although it is not uncommon for

academic colleagues at Oxford University to search the web for materials to use in their teaching, most tutors remain unaware of the growing pool of openly licensed educational resources. To raise academic engagement with OER at Oxford, we began a programme of training activities to increase open-content literacy across the institution. We define open-content literacy as: "knowing when and why open content is needed, where to find and share it, and how to create, evaluate, and use it in an ethical manner" (Highton, 2011). Investigating a situated practice of engagement with, and use of, OER in the context of higher education in the United Kingdom is also the subject of a new research project by the third author of this paper in the scope of her SCORE teaching fellowship.[8] The new study will explore practices that are currently emerging in this area, from the perspective of both their providers and beneficiaries. The aim of the study is to achieve a clearer understanding of successful practice, so that we can promote sustained engagement with, and use of, OER in teaching and learning in different institutional contexts.

Our experience with OER projects at Oxford University indicates that academics tend to feel more comfortable when their OER materials are clearly credited to them. Such acknowledgement hints at the changes afforded by the new media—in an audio or video podcast, the presenter is clearly identified and there is a low risk of anyone else using their material inappropriately. Furthermore, because we have implemented processes and workflows to handle licensing and legal issues in ways that are institutionally acceptable, academics do not have to grapple with these challenges themselves. Despite the prevailing message that universities and colleges should act in a rigorous, 'business-like' fashion, in many cases individual teaching styles remain closely linked to professional identity and reputation. Although the perceived advantage of OER is that they can be used in any context, information about attribution is critical to a user's ability to evaluate the content. This is to some extent confirmed by the findings from the OER Impact Study, in which experienced OER users expressed their preference for materials originating from higher educational institutions and other trusted organisations such as research institutes with established reputations (Masterman & Wild, 2011, p. 20).

Conclusion

It is appropriate for a university with a global brand to be addressing challenges and extending its reach, and Oxford University has recognised that OER activity is in line with its business, mission, and purpose. This alignment is reflected in several case studies included in official institutional marketing publications. The availability of OER contributes to outreach efforts, particularly in a traditional institution which may have been formerly regarded as being relatively closed—the Oxford brand is being seen internationally in a new light, and academics are able to participate in extending this reach (Geng et al., 2011).

The *Cape Town Declaration* suggests that we are on the "cusp of a global revolution in teaching and learning. Educators worldwide are developing a vast pool of educational resources on the Internet, open and free for all to use" (Open Society Institute, 2007, para. 1). Our experience with OER projects at Oxford University has demonstrated that technology may have reached a point where some of the technical, legal, and cost barriers have been removed far enough to enable colleagues to painlessly embrace new ways of working—motivated by their values and interests in disseminating their research widely in a way that was never possible or practical in the past. Interaction with that global audience has brought reward and recognition to motivate contributors, and learning technology projects have built capacity within the institution.

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[8] http://www8.open.ac.uk/score/about_SCORE

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Melissa has management responsibility for the Learning Technologies Group in the Oxford University Computing Service; she has institutional responsibility for e-learning strategy, the VLE, and IT skills and training. She is a Fellow of Kellogg College and works closely with the E-learning Research Group in the Department of Education. She is the senior manager responsible for Oxford's current OER initiatives and the development of open-source learning technologies.

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Jill has extensive experience as a learning technologist in a variety of higher-education institutions. Her portfolio includes working closely with academics to identify needs and opportunities for effective use of a variety of technologies, particularly the institutional VLE. She is responsible for designing and developing help and support resources, and academic staff training courses and materials.

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Joanna has been involved in researching the area of technology-enhanced learning since 2004. Her main field of research is learning design, evaluation of learning technologies, and (currently) open educational practices. Recently she was involved in the JISC-funded OER impact study and the ESRC/EPSRC-funded Learning Design Support Environment (LDSE) project. Joanna also has experience in supporting academic staff in their use of new technologies, an important part of her former role as a learning technologist.