

Mapping the Landscape of OER Institutional Initiatives

Summary of **Week Three** (25-30 November 2012)

Reflection and next steps

Design of an “OER World Map”

Organisation

Resources available/needed

Next steps

This document provides an overview of key points addressed during week three of the Athabasca University supported OER mapping discussion (<https://unescochair.athabascau.ca/oer-mapping-exercise>), building on the interaction of the previous weeks.

- Week one summary: <https://unescochair.athabascau.ca/oer-mapping-exercise/summaries/week1>
- Week two summary: <https://unescochair.athabascau.ca/oer-mapping-exercise/summaries/week2>

Please feel free to share these summaries among your colleagues and networks.

1. Why Map the OER Landscape? (Revisited)

Discussion of this topic remained active during the third week, with clarification of issues and building toward some consensus. Participants largely agreed upon the following principles:

- A geographical map is a simple and effective way to represent information about OER initiatives.
- A map could promote a social network, connecting people (even those isolated) and organisations to each other, serving a variety of ends – e.g. a “LinkedIn for OER.”
- A map could similarly connect OER users, not just developers and advocates.
- As an awareness tool, a map could help people identify others with whom they might collaborate, avoiding duplication of effort and identifying local resources.
- A map could visually highlight networks of activity around different aspects of OER. (As one participant noted, maps can “help us ‘see’ things we may not otherwise have seen and to make connections we might not otherwise have noticed”).
- A map could track trends: for example, the growth in the number of OER initiatives as well the number of initiatives terminated.
- While collecting a substantial amount of information about initiatives might be desirable, it would be appropriate to start with a modest approach: if basic information were collected first, additional information and links could be added later.

2. Design of an “OER World Map”

Specific ideas and examples were examined that are indicative of the type of design that could be envisioned.

- A collaborative approach (“crowdsourcing”) using a data entry form would allow adding and updating entries in a uniform way, contributing to the quality of the information.
- A number of new technical and visual models were cited and explored, with links provided.
- Whatever representation is chosen must be free/open, scalable and interoperable (where possible), to anticipate future linkages and growth.¹

3. Organisation

Several members of the OER community volunteered preliminary suggestions about how they might contribute in a manner appropriate to their own context(s), which indicates the beginning of a network. There is particular enthusiasm in areas where English is not the primary language.

¹ Lively discussion of metadata and standards continued this week.

- There are offers to translate mapping discussion outcomes into other languages, and to share them with regional or language-based networks.
- There are offers to act as representatives, collecting and organising data, and liaising with appropriate regional bodies.
- Several suggest leveraging the principles and outcomes of the UNESCO World OER Congress (2012) to engage governing bodies and international organisations in this project.

4. Resources Available/Needed

The general acceptance of collaboration/crowdsourcing as a primary means of keeping OER map information up-to-date suggests that individuals will themselves serve as resources – and providers of resources – going forward. Members were generous in offering information about the wide range of existing OER repositories, and repositories of repositories, which would be relevant to this map.

5. Licensing Issues Arising

A lively discussion about the merits and problems associated with various licensing provisions emerged, described by one participant as "one of the most productive discussions on licensing alternatives and their implications." It is not possible to capture the richness of the interaction in one paragraph, but the following points are indicative of the range of the discussion.

- The opening post described a scenario in which it is a practical impossibility to seek permission from the many authors of non-commercial (NC)-licensed work that has evolved over many years.
- There was discussion of "enclosure", i.e. the act of placing restrictions on access to one instance of an otherwise free work; and whether provisions like NC impact this dynamic.
- Tuition-bearing courses were likened to paid movie theaters, with free resources compared to the "free" popcorn inside (described in a related blog post).
- The lack of a clear, shared understanding of what is meant by "commercial use," and the associated problem of seeking clarification, was discussed.
- The significance of perspective (e.g. of the learner, the author, etc.) was noted, leading to proposed definitions of OER that reflect the author's beliefs, rather than prescribing specific license terms.

6. Next Steps

Ongoing discussions within the list suggested these areas of concern:

- A set of basic information was put forward for a start, with several items added by participants, continuing the reflection on what information is "essential" as opposed to "nice to have."
- Participants were encouraged to hold local discussion in their own areas, using/translating any of the documentation that would be useful for that purpose.
- Linkages with related communities were strongly recommended and could be established, e.g. with Open Source Software and Libraries/Librarians, and particularly with Open Access.
- A draft report will be circulated to the community for comment.

7. Week Three Conclusions

Week three discussion built on that of the preceding weeks, clarifying outstanding issues and continuing a wide range of related considerations. The conversation concluded with a general affirmation of the topic of the discussion – that the OER community could work together to begin to build an OER world map.

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