

Preface

This collection of chapters deals with a broad range of issues relating to OER, Web 2.0 tools, and collaborative learning. The approaches of the chapters are as diverse as their content, ranging from narratives to analytical empirical work. After a brief summary of each chapter and section, the editor concludes the preface with a few high level remarks.

SECTION 1: WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND OER COMMUNITIES

Andy Lane writes that OER by themselves are not enough - there needs to be better collaboration between the stakeholders if OER are not to be seen as a way of simply widening the audience for Higher Education knowledge, rather than widening participation in learning more generally.

Susan D'Antoni tells the story of the UNESCO OER community, which discusses OER from a variety of perspectives and with unbridled enthusiasm. One participant commented it felt like “the whole world was around the table.” (This editor recalls this discussion with fondness, and yes, it certainly felt like the whole world was leaving messages in my Inbox.)

Lisa Petrides, Cynthia Jimes, and Carol Hedgspeth describe how knowledge sharing and collaboration can be seen as indicators of learning in OER communities.

Finally, Giovanni Fulantelli, Davide Taibi, Manuel Gentile, and Mario Allegra describe an Open Learning Object model and how it has evolved over the course of three projects, with an emphasis on teacher communities of practice in the project contexts.

This section posits answers to a number of questions about OER and community that are, to my mind, still open questions. Are OER produced by a community necessarily better than OER produced by an individual? Are OER produced by an individual or institution second-class citizens compared to OER developed under wiki-like community models? How many of the benefits of open source really apply to open educational resources? How much of the open source model can be applied directly to the production of educational materials (Benkler (2005) has specifically argued that critical parts cannot)?

SECTION 2: PRODUCING, REUSING, AND RECREATING OER

Alexandra Okada and Scott Leslie discuss the OER Flow, an open and flexible framework, and demonstrate how helping people to create OER and, in particular Compendium maps, can aid the potential of reusability.

Ivana Marenzi and Wolfgang Nejdl present LearnWeb2.0, a searching, rating, and commenting tool used in the context of two Content and Language Integrated Learning courses, one in Germany and one in Italy.

Freda Wolfenden and Alison Buckler describe an empirically based approach to understanding and representing the OER adaptation processes as it occurs in the Teacher Education in Sub Saharan Africa consortium.

Najat Smeda, Eva Dakich, and Nalin Sharda describe a model for collaborative, constructivist digital storytelling using freely available Web 2.0 tools.

Alexandra Bujokas de Siqueira, Danilo Rothberg, and Martha Maria Prata-Linhares demonstrate the use of Web 2.0 tools to create open courses focused on emergent subjects of the media literacy among in-service teachers, and issues relating to assessment in these environments.

Finally, Israel Gutterz Rojas and colleagues present the design and implementation of an application prototype that permits teachers and course developers to manage and share open assessment resources.

This section discusses what is, to me, the core issue surrounding OER – reuse. It is incredibly important to clearly understand the differences between simple reuse (like embedding a verbatim copy of an OER), revising an OER (like adapting a British-made OER for reuse in Brazil), and remixing an OER (combining multiple OER in to a new OER). While they have much in common, these three activities are separate and distinct, and each has its own unique technical, pedagogical, and legal considerations.

SECTION 3: SHARING USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Josh McCarthy pushes the boundaries of OER by characterizing a scheme for using social networking sites to connect students with industry professionals for mentoring as an open educational resource.

Aileen McGuigan explains how traditional VLE's like Blackboard stifle collaborative learning, and how purposefully designed environments using Web 2.0 tools like blogs effectively support collaboration.

Giselle Ferreira and Tina Wilson reinforce the importance of tutors and facilitators as distance learning students use Web 2.0 tools and OER.

Sibren Fetter, Adriana Berlanga, and Peter Sloep show the potential of Ad-Hoc Transient Groups (AHTGs) for providing peer support and facilitating the community side of formal and informal learning.

Joseph Corneli and Alexander Mikroyannidis compare crowdsourced and traditional education, observing that the crowdsourcing model has room for most of the roles found in the traditional education setting (accreditation and assessment being the open questions here).

Finally, Pradeep Kumar Misra writes about the potential power of OER to engage ageing individuals in the lifelong learning process.

This section reminds us that there is still a terrific need for humans and human interaction in the learning process. While the Internet is primarily a communications medium, Internet-based courses have historically been exercises in downloading rather than communicating. Web 2.0 tools, which are inherently social in nature, present opportunities for collaborative learning as expansive as the first generation of VLEs was restrictive.

SECTION 4: SOCIAL LEARNING, RICH MEDIA, AND GAMES

Rebecca Ferguson and Simon Buckingham Shum examine the meaning of open in terms of tools, resources, and education, and go on to explore the association between open approaches to education, the development of online social learning, and a tool called SocialLearn.

Martin Wolpers and colleagues demonstrate that OER are spread across numerous repositories that do not interoperate and do not support collaborative learning, and then describe a tool called MACE designed to overcome some of these challenges in the architectural domain.

Andy Lane and Andrew Law discuss the approaches and evidence required to guide the joint development of rich media in a way that both serves the BBC, the OUUK, the Higher Education sector and the wider community.

Christophe Salzmann and colleagues present the challenges in deploying remote and virtual laboratories as OER, as well as a review of trends in using Web 2.0 technologies to broader adoption and ease of development or remote labs.

Finally, Teresa Connolly and Elpida Makriyannis describe OERopoly, a board game that acquaints players with a variety of OER projects, tools, technologies, and communities of practice.

The final section of the book is a grab bag of OER, Web 2.0 tools, and collaborative learning. Ranging from remote labs to board games to online social sites, the section demonstrates the wide variety of ways OER is integrating into the broad complexity of educational research.

CONCLUSION

As you enjoy the chapters in this collection, I invite the reader to carefully consider the difference between online educational resources that use a traditional copyright license (not OER) and online educational resources that are openly licensed (OER). I found that throughout the chapters several authors attribute benefits or challenges to OER that are really benefits or challenges of not OER online educational resources – that is to say, challenges or benefits that have nothing to do with being open. I believe the field will benefit significantly from greater clarity of thought regarding this difference. The following chapters provide an excellent context in which to explore this and other important issues related to OER.

David Wiley
Brigham Young University, USA

REFERENCE

Benkler, Y. (2005). *Common wisdom: Peer production of educational materials*. Retrieved from http://www.benkler.org/Common_Wisdom.pdf