

# Social Media for enriching collaborative open learning and collective knowledge

Alexandra Okada

Knowledge Media Institute  
The Open University UK

## Abstract

This paper demonstrates some pedagogical strategies for enriching collaborative open learning - “co-learning” and collective knowledge through social media. The study centres on the e-book Open Educational Resources and Social Networks ([oer.kmi.open.ac.uk](http://oer.kmi.open.ac.uk)) developed by the open research network COLEARN during 2012. Its collaborative research question focused on how academic communities could make their work more accessible and reusable as Open Educational Resources using Social Media. A hundred and thirteen participants – researchers, lecturers, supervisors, postgraduates and undergraduates –, from thirty research groups of different universities and countries co-authored thirty-three chapters that draw upon their mainstream research and redesigned the content to make it more reusable and understandable for a broader target audience. The theoretical principles which our qualitative and quantitative analysis are grounded are: participatory media, Commons-Based Peer Production, Mass collaboration. Our outcomes show that through social knowledge media, co-learners can convey their views by sharing questions, information, tools, practices, methods, productions and reflections. They can also rate, tag, review, comment and share others’ collaborations. All of these contribute to the development of new thoughts, research and innovation towards open collective knowledge.

## 1. INTRODUCTION (SUMMARY)

Openness in Education through Social media indicates new ways for individuals and communities to learn with each other and create knowledge together. In this Digital Age based on open content, social networks and mobile technologies, people can acquire and use information as well as discuss and share reflections draw on real-life communication. The sense of “*always being in touch or reachable*”, through Social Media and open access to knowledge have been enabling learners and professionals new ways of “Collaboration 2.0” (Okada et al, 2012). Users, learners, educators and researchers can now self-manage and self-maintain their own collaborative networks through social media for sharing and creating knowledge collaboratively.

Social media presented an impressive growth in 2011. Statistics show that social media increased from 36% of global Internet users to 59%, reaching a total of 2.8 billion social media profiles that is equivalent to half of all web users worldwide. The number of Facebook users is currently more than 800 million, with more than 200 million registrations per year. YouTube has become the second largest search engine in the world after Google, receiving two billion views a day. With regard to content published through social media per week, more than 3.5 billion pieces of content are shared in Facebook, more than 1 billion in Twitter, and more than 604,800 hours of video in YouTube (Social Media Today, 2012; Social Marketing Trends, 2012; Digital Buzz, 2012). More specifically related to open content under Creative Commons License, Flickr hosts 200 million in October 2011; Wikimedia

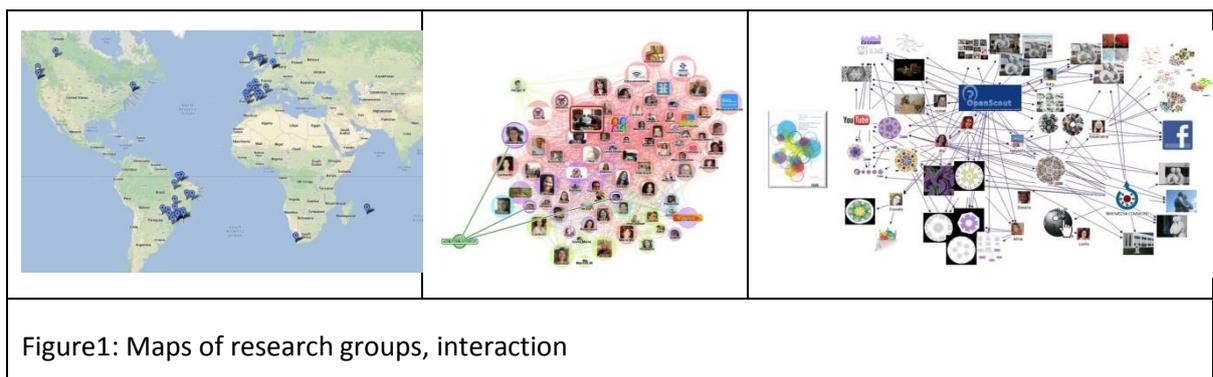
Commons has over 12 million files in January 2012. Vimeo added the Creative Commons Attribution license as an option for all users on July 2010. YouTube also implemented an open license but only on June 2011 and started with an initial open library with 10,000 videos. (Okada, 2012)

This paper demonstrates some pedagogical strategies for enriching collaborative open learning and co-authorship through social media. Session 2 describe the case study based on the ebook *Open Educational Resources and Social Networks* (oer.kmi.open.ac.uk) developed by the open research network COLEARN during 2012, who were interested in investigating how academic researchers can make their work more accessible and reusable as Open Educational Resources using Social Media. Session 3 introduces some the theoretical principles and strategies used in this study for guiding data collection and analysis. Finally, Session 4 describes our outcomes which highlight that open social knowledge media drive colearners and professionals headlong into an age of real-life communication, large-scale collaboration and collective production. .

## 2. CASE STUDY: OER.KMI.OPEN.AC.UK

*“Open Educational Resources and Social Networks”*, a book created by the open research network COLEARN, highlights different ways of reusing, recreating, remixing and redistributing OER. Its purpose was to illustrate how the collaborative production of research-based OER can contribute to enriching learning and teaching experiences in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. Its key aim was to provide readers new opportunities for enriching collaborative open learning (colearning) by constructing knowledge together through social networking and co-authorship.

A hundred and thirteen coauthors from thirty research groups of different universities and countries co-authored thirty-three chapters that draw upon their mainstream research and redesigned the content to make it more reusable and understandable for a broader target audience.



## 3. THE THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES

This research was based on some key features of Cyberculture: participatory media (Rheingold,2008), Commons-Based Peer Production (Benkler, 2006), Mass collaboration (Tapscott, 2006), which drive colearners and professionals headlong into an age of real-life communication, large-scale collaboration and collective production. Through open channels, colearners can convey

their views by sharing questions, information, tools, practices, methods, productions and reflections. They can also rate, tag, review, comment and share others' collaborations. All of these contribute to the development of new thoughts, research and innovation towards open collective knowledge.

This book was developed through "Social Knowledge Media", therefore exemplifying a process of generating, understanding and sharing knowledge using several different media, as well as understanding how the use of different media shape these processes (Eisenstadt & Vincent, 1998, p. 4). Social Knowledge media focus on dialogue and sensemaking as opposed to a transmission or broadcasting media approach (Dalgaard, xxx). It emphasizes the importance of social interactions for enriching collective understanding as well as collaborative and personalised construction of knowledge.

The principles that guided the construction of this book are based on the four key features presented at OpenScience.org:

- Transparency in methodology, observation, and data collection;
- Availability and re-use of research data;
- Public accessibility to scientific communication;
- Using social media to facilitate scientific collaboration and communication.

Social Knowledge Media were used in this book for

- bringing research groups together for co-authorship of this book;
- discussing Openness Philosophy and co-designing of OER;
- reflecting and collaboratively describing technologies for co-creating content as OER;
- creating and publishing, collaboratively with readers, open multimedia resources which can be reused, readapted, remixed and redistributed by anyone;
- collecting open data to analyze and review participants' contributions and productions;
- developing and disseminating open educational research based on the processes, technologies and networking used to produce this book.

The scientific review was implemented in three stages, respectively conducted by: (1) the Editorial Board and OER design team; (2) Scientific Committee and peer reviewers; and (3) social networks of readers and experts in the field. Seven open web conferences were organised with research groups responsible for each chapter, who discussed their content with readers through Facebook and Flash Meeting. The open online discussions and Web video meetings are also available with chapters in the book website: <http://oer.kmi.open.ac.uk>

#### 4. OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSION

The majority of the co-authors, who are leaders of research groups in their institutions, invited colleagues, students, lecturers and researchers to provide feedback. In some groups, the most active readers were invited to participate in the chapter rewriting by adding new media components: images, videoclips, and knowledge maps, glossary, learning objectives and activities, key questions,

social media for further discussions as well as suggestions of how other readers might be able to reuse the content.

The target audience of this book is the wider educational community across all sectors. Its content was written by and prepared for undergraduate and postgraduate students, researchers, teaching practitioners, librarians, policy makers, educational technologists and individuals. This book is for anyone interested in how OER through Web 2.0, social media and emerging technologies will impact on formal education and the social of collaborative online learning and social networks.

The role of students, postgraduates and undergraduates as co-authors has been pivotal, and their contribution has been varied, ranging from technical support for the use of technology to create media components, to establishing connections between content and tools as well as participation in discussions that helped to reshape the material for the intended audience as well as increasing its reusability.

During the production of this book, a process that lasted a year and half, it was possible to observe that beyond open content, OER include knowledge construction with learning objectives as well as a transparent process of producing educational content. All chapters in this book can be “Reused, Reworked, Remixed and Redistributed”, as Wiley(2009) puts it. All of us, as open researchers, believe that sharing content openly, together with making the process of creating content transparent, strengthen the “four Rs” of OER. Even little OER (Weller, 2010) such as images, photos, graphs in this book include description, objectives, open licenses and tools used to create it, which are available on open repositories.

#### REFERENCES:

Benkler, Yochai (2006) *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven: Yale, 2006. ISBN 0-300-11056-1

Eisenstadt, M., & Vincent, T. (Eds.) (1998). *The Knowledge Web*. Kogan Page.

Jenkins, Henry. (2006). *Convergence Culture- Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press, 2006. ISBN 0-8147-4281-5.

Okada, A., Mikroyannidis, A., Meister, I. & Little, S. (2012). “Colearning” – Collaborative Open Learning through OER and Social. In: Okada, A. (2012). *Open Educational Resources and Social Networks: Co-Learning and Professional Development*. London: Scholio Educational Research & Publishing.

Rheingold, Howard (2008) “Welcome to Participatory Media Literacy.” *Participatory Media Literacy*. Available at <http://www.socialtext.net/medialiteracy/index.cgi/> (accessed January 2009)

Tapscott, Don. Anthony D. Williams (2006). *Wikinomics:How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*. Penguin USA: New York, 2006. ISBN 1-59184-138-0