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Keynote Presentation: Implementing resource reuse in learning and teaching. The journey from RLO to OER? (Chris Pegler)

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In this session within the H818 2013 online conference Chris will review the journey from RLO (reusable learning objects) to OER (open educational resources) identifying fellow travellers (Stephen Downes, David Wiley, Martin Weller, David Kernohan etc.) along the way and provide context for some of the obsessions and unresolved (and resolved) issues in OER/open education based on the history of progress so far. Are we nearly there* yet? Chris will help you to reach your own informed conclusions.

* there = reuse of resources in learning and teaching

Extra content

A great deal of this material was taken from my PhD. This has the catchy title of:

Pegler, Chris (2011). *Reuse and Repurposing of Online Digital Learning Resources within UK Higher Education: 2003-2010*. PhD thesis The Open University.

Available here: <http://oro.open.ac.uk/32317/>

The reuse cards can be viewed on the ORIOLE site 'shop' <http://orioleproject.blogspot.co.uk/p/shop.html>

as can the cartoon used [available here](#)



Chris Pegler

10:17 on 21 February 2014

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[Dr Simon Ball](#)

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Following the live presentations, we asked each speaker to respond to questions posed by audience members. In the short time available, it was not possible to put all of the questions submitted to the speaker for a response. We asked all speakers if they would respond to the unanswered questions here on Cloudworks. Here are all of the questions asked during the session:

- ▶ Do you think people think about how things can be made more open - 'clean feeds' - components. What you feel about granularity?
- ▶ teachers are not necessarily the best producers of materials - or have access to high quality images, etc. or have time to search, of course
- ▶ When I looked at this I found very little research had been done into who was using OER and why. Seems like a massive hole.
- ▶ Reusing other people's materials takes an inordinate amount of time for me!
- ▶ Reuse by OU academics has typically been driven by knowing who has created particular sections of modules that you know, trust and you don't have to search out the resources - you know in advance it can help you & you can reuse.
- ▶ A lot of re-use may be from something like TED, which is easily available but was not produced as educational resources
- ▶ It gets even more complicated when reuse happens across contexts - e.g. materials reuse for developing world context (language, localisation)
- ▶ Wouldn't it be better for universities to pool resources and syndicate content the way news agencies do for newspapers? Not quite OER but that way you could get round quality and technical problems.
- ▶ does the selection/adaption process reduce the potential benefits and time-saving
- ▶ I have been reading about 'pull OERs', where academic/teacher works with a community to develop resources the community needs.
- ▶ Are we naturally more inclined to create, or to copy ... rather than 're-use'. Yet musicians 'remix'.
I wonder if there is invisible reuse wherein the object is the penultimate idea that is reversioned or tweaked so that the educator feels greater ownership, or that they have 'moved it on'?

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- ▶ Easy to reuse resources if branding formats style are the same
- ▶ should we add another r to openness - redesign
- ▶ Can reuse be limited by the nuances of branding ...
Open Ideas makes sense to me from what I see in courses for creatives in advertising - the so called 'scamp' is far easier and natural and preferable as a shared idea rather than anything that looks finished.
- ▶ Granularity doesn't mean small!!!! it means size and 'clean nature of resource
- ▶ What role do MOOCs (are they predigested non-shareable OERs?) play now for 4Rs type of sharing?



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>> Do you think people think about how things can be made more open - 'clean feeds' - components. What you feel about granularity?

>> Granularity doesn't mean small!!!! it means size and 'clean nature of resource

I answered this in the session by saying that it depends on the people that you are referring to here (see the slides showing who is active in the early and later stages of reuse). I should also make it clear that there are two different questions in my opinion. So in terms of **clean feeds**. If I have understood these then these are things that matter to people who are building and maintaining systems rather than users. The user (learner or teacher) is not that aware of them and although there are benefits for them I don't think that they 'think about' clean feeds at all. No more than they think about anything else to do with the infrastructure of reuse unless the system fails in some way.

Granularity is interesting to both early and later use participants. I would say particularly to those who are using (although they may not use this term). Granularity can be linked to size and in the world of automated RLOs it was linked to size. The idea of personalisation 'on the fly' using LD players was one where granularity at the asset level (a single picture or paragraph) were seen as important. Resources were described as having high or low levels of 'granularity' with low levels seen as less reusable.

Cara is correct that granularity is not about size. It's about being self-contained (which was a principle virtue of RLOs) as mentioned in the presentation they should be technically 'free-standing, non-sequential, coherent and unitary' (Longmire, 2000). This is why Cable Green in that clip demonstrating open texts could take sections out and slot new sections in. They don't have internal links to any parts of the resource from which they are taken so can be reused widely. Granularity requires the resources to be written in a particular 'stand alone' way and this was a criticism leveled at RLOs, that it required those creating course content to set aside their usual practices (for example not name the system that they use e.g. Moodle) if the content is to be reused. This is extra work or change in practice for many. With open resources offering the potential to repurpose (change and adapt) as well as reuse this is less important. Resources that are not stand-alone are recognised as having value in much the same way that resources having a clear 'context' are now seen as valuable reusable resources. Originally (with RLOs) the ideal was suggested as 'context-free' so that anyone could reuse the resource in any context.

[Chris Pegler](#)



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>> teachers are not necessarily the best producers of materials - or have access to high quality images, etc. or have time to search, of course

I would query what 'the best' means here. I have evaluated resources which cost a lot to make and were generated by expert teams yet they have never been tried with students and, although offered to reuse, may never be used by students.

The advantage that the user of resources has in reusing what they use in practice is that this is known to have worked in practice with real people, perhaps refined over several years. It may not be the flashiest, or the glitziest but it can have a robustness and authenticity which is equally valuable. Weller's Big and Little OER paper is good at showing that this mixed economy approach to OER is useful.

This may link back to the not-wanting-to-share-what-you-have-not-worked-up-into-final-version. This is nicely modest but if reuse is often about adapting, what is shared does not need to be perfect.

Weller, M. J., (2010). *Big and little OER*. Paper presented at Open Ed 2010: Seventh Annual Open Education Conference, 2-4 November, Barcelona, <http://oro.open.ac.uk/24702/> (last accessed 30 November 2011)



[Chris Pegler](#)

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>> Reuse by OU academics has typically been driven by knowing who has created particular sections of modules that you know, trust and you don't have to search out the resources - you know in advance it can help you & you can reuse.

>> Reusing other people's materials takes an inordinate amount of time for me!

>> does the selection/adaption process reduce the potential benefits and time-saving

I would refer you to the Zone of Proximity slide here for a partial answer (see the presentation slides). If you are reusing our own material (say things that you used on previous presentations) you may not consider that as reuse but it is a form of reuse (updating or recontextualising or reformatting). Because you know the material well you don't have the same problem as shown in the Westfall quote (that it takes so long to know material well enough to teach using that content). Moving out from sharing with yourself there is more to learn, but if you are within the same organisation or discipline then the terms, approaches, core texts, creators, etc. are going to have overlap. I have sometimes felt that the only metadata you might need to know whether something is worth looking at is the name of the creator (if you have to choose only one field). This is revealing about style and approach in the same way that an author's name on a book might be. So depending on where you look you may find usable content quite quickly. Sometimes that will be near to home...

There is a certain irony that it can be easier to find resources by close colleagues within open repositories than it may be within an intranet with firewalls and course-based views.



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>> Are we naturally more inclined to create, or to copy ... rather than 're-use'. Yet musicians 'remix'.

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>> A lot of re-use may be from something like TED, which is easily available but was not produced as educational resources

The idea of 'remix' is very important. Its one of the 4Rs of reuse suggested by David Wiley as the basis for the open in Open Content <http://www.opencontent.org/definition/> Reuse by linking is also one of those 4Rs and similar to the sort of reuse of TED. You may be linking to resources designed for a different context so writing activity around them but not changing the resource itself. For remix you are creating something new, but how and what we mix depends on access to skill, resource (time and tools and support) and also the availability of a license that allows it. I would agree that tweaking can create more sense of ownership (on personal experience anyhow) but does it diminish the sense of ownership of the original creator to have their resource remixed? Would this prevent them sharing.

With remix you also have to consider whether you are changing (reducing) the accessibility or the accuracy of a resource. As I mentioned in the talk a health resource may need to be protected from meddling that may undermine its accuracy, which may be linked to need to refer to the up to date legal conditions. but not so a language resource which is more open to remix without hazardous consequences.

There is an argument that a resource becomes an educational resource when used in education - it need not have been made as an educational resource.



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>> When I looked at this I found very little research had been done into who was using OER and why. Seems like a massive hole.

We know more about why people say that they don't reuse rather than why they do. There has been some research done into reuse of learning objects - see CD-LOR project and I had a small project which tried to find out what practitioners did (I quote some stats from that in the presentation). One problem- also alluded to - is that what we can measure, e.g. downloads, does not represent reuse. Use can occur years after the resource was initially discovered. Or not follow on from discovery/download at all.

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