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Reducing barriers to sharing material in the humanities department of a University of Applied Science leading to the implementation of a common CMS

## Student Dissertation

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## SAT: Reducing barriers to sharing material in the humanities department of a University of Applied Science leading to the implementation of a common CMS (Mark Adams)

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Cloud created by:



[Dr Simon Ball](#)  
10 February 2014

Full title: Reducing barriers to sharing material in the humanities department of a University of Applied Science leading to the implementation of a common content management system.

### Abstract

Technikum Wien is the biggest purely technical Fachhochschule in Vienna which is a tertiary education institute best translated as a University of Applied Science. It has over 30 separate courses of study, including Master and Bachelor programs. For the fourth year now, they also offer several blended learning courses with international students.

English is an integral part of each of these courses and due to social security restrictions (each lecturer is only allowed to teach for a maximum of 6 hours per institute if not fully employed) the size of the Humanities faculty is relatively large with over 30 colleagues. This is a huge pool of experience which could be tapped to improve both the student experience and reduce teacher workload and preparation time.

It has been suggested several times to initiate a platform for the sharing of relevant material, but this has never been realised, despite recognition from all lecturers that it would be a useful resource to have. This casestudy attempts first to pinpoint the barriers to sharing teaching material and then to create a platform which should minimise resistance of the teaching personnel and make sharing common practice.

Literature research on barriers to OER adoption builds the basis for the presentation. Following this research a questionnaire is created to find the main reasons for the reluctance use such a platform within the faculty. The questionnaire should also assess the level of willingness to share on the ideological level and the situations in which sharing does currently take place at the Technikum Wien.

The results of the questionnaire are evaluated on several levels; first the willingness to share which is shown, for the most part, to be high, however with several restrictions including reservations about use outside of the faculty and material provided to third parties; secondly the barriers to OER adoption are compared to the barriers mentioned by the lecturers and

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commonalities are found. As a final step any resolutions already found for OER are applied to the barriers within the Technikum and suggestions are made on how to minimise any further hurdles.

The culmination of the casestudy is a shared platform which considers each of the barriers suggested by the lecturers and attempts to make the sharing of material as easy as possible. The solution uses a technology already known and used by all of the lecturers to reduce the technological barrier and is organised in such a way as to be directly relevant to the core teaching materials of the programs at Technikum Wien.

One of the main barriers to sharing for the majority of lecturers was the time factor, as sharing means creating a lesson plan, or scanning material, for example. To prevent this from becoming the major reason for the platform failing, it is suggested that support from the faculty and management may be necessary, especially financial support. Defining a coordinator for this material would significantly reduce lecturer's fear of added work expenditure.

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[Nicola Morris](#)

9:36pm 14 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

I look forward to hearing your ideas tomorrow. I would be interested to hear particularly ideas windchill have limited costs attached to them. What happens to the material when someone moves on or leaves?



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

7:30pm 15 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

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:

- ▶ I would be interested to hear particularly ideas which have limited costs attached to them. What happens to the material when someone moves on or leaves?
- ▶ One key driver is to change recognition and reward system of institution to reward sharing

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- ▶ Sharing is a relatively new mindset for most.
- ▶ Offering a brutal conclusion 'social' will only come once your current population of co-workers has been infiltrated by 'social' types - at all levels. Only those who are social in the real world are social online and academia does attract those who want to shut themselves away in a cupboard.
- ▶ sharing - can you walk the walk and talk the talk
- ▶ Its a matter of trust - did some research into personal repositories and sharing and similar provisos
- ▶ is this a different level of trust than happens in face to face?
- ▶ Mark do you think that the mindsets of your colleagues could be changed if they see the benefits realised such as the impact or effect sharing has on people etc



[Susan Hobbs](#)

7:27pm 19 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

I was very interested in your presentation. There appears to be a reluctance to share in my organisation too. Maybe it's to do with the effort of producing the resource in the first place and that the author wants recognition for this. Or is it to do with the imbalance between givers and takers?



[Mark Adams](#)

8:29am 22 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

@Nicolal think in a project like this there are always costs attached. However in my case I hope to be able to motivate the lecturers through showing them the advantages of sharing and making the "personal gains" more clear to them. The department is prepared to support someone as an admin to collect and format the content so that should reduce lecturers fears of the time involved, but the costs will be kept to a minimum. Since the platform - Moodle - is already in place there are no further costs for infrastructure. I am basically using what is there and adapting it to my or the departments needs.



[Mark Adams](#)

8:32am 22 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

One key driver is to change recognition and reward system of institution to reward sharing

I like this suggestion very much and will maybe see whether there is the possibility of some kind of reward system possible - even if only something small. However I had hoped, as I said during the presentation, that the more altruistic characteristics could be brought to the fore, rather than the materialistic or even reputation/recognition side of things.



[Mark Adams](#)

8:37am 22 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Sharing is a relatively new mindset for most.

I think I would have to agree with this, although to be honest I personally never had this

mindset. I came to Austria as an English assistant and one of the first things I did was collect all of the lesson plans created by myself and the other assistants and put it on a CD so that everyone could use everybody else's ideas. I mean, a couple of hours work and half of my lessons for the semester were already covered. No prep, new materials, fun exercises etc etc. This links closely with the next comment which was :

*Offering a brutal conclusion 'social' will only come once your current population of co-workers has been infiltrated by 'social' types - at all levels.*

I very much agree with this but hope that through my own actions I might be able to make sharing more commonplace in the department and therefore perhaps be able to "turn" those in the "cupboard" into sharers :-)



[Mark Adams](#)

8:40am 22 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

sharing - can you walk the walk and talk the talk

if I understand this right, it basically means "put your money where your mouth is" and in this case I think it is clear that I do share, and that I actively attempt to make sharing a culture within the department. Despite academia, I do think this is possible, but you will always have those who think that their material belongs only to them or is "better than everyone else's". Everybody is different - which is probably exactly why the sharing, when it works, is so successful, as we all see things from different viewpoints.



[Mark Adams](#)

8:45am 22 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

It's a matter of trust

Again I totally agree. There were many levels of trust mentioned. Can I trust someone to use my materials correctly? Can I trust this person not to give my materials to a third party? Can I trust this person to reciprocate? All of these and more are important factors in sharing. If the trust is not there, sharing will not take place.



[Mark Adams](#)

8:52am 22 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

is this a different level of trust than happens in face to face?

I think that, as with everything online, there is a difference to face-2-face. When I am face-2-face my level of trust I think is automatically much higher. I am making the choice on an individual basis how to share and with whom to share my material. Online I am giving up much of that freedom of personal choice and therefore trust is not on an individual basis, but rather one must decide whether one is able to trust "everyone" within the faculty and that decision is then much more difficult. I may share all of my material with some people and some of my material with everyone, if that makes sense. I think trust is a central issue here and the online repository makes trusting more difficult than face-2-face.



Mark Adams

8:59am 22 February 2014 [Permalink](#)

Do you think that the mindsets of your colleagues could be changed if they see the benefits realised such as the impact or effect sharing has on people etc

I know it can. I have already shared some of my material with colleagues who would not normally have shared before. While they may not be willing to share with everyone yet, they are willing to share with me. In many cases it is not necessarily an adamant wish "not to share", more often is simply that they don't think about it, or in some cases do not realise themselves how good the material is and therefore believe that by sharing they are "forcing" their material on others. Again addressing this conception helps to reduce the barriers to sharing. Once a lecturer sees that others do appreciate their material and see it being used in the classroom by others, and perhaps even having it improved on in some way, their lack of confidence in their material fades and sharing becomes more common. Again this is only one aspect as not everyone views sharing as forcing their materials on others.

In short, yes I believe it the mindsets can and "should" be changed. I have however recognised that this is not something that will happen overnight, but am confident with the right support and with an "innovator" or "pioneer" fueling the drive, it can and will happen.

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