

Wiley, Bliss, and McEwen, “Open Educational Resources: OER Literature Review”

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Background

The authors provide a thorough review of the existing literature on open educational resources in 2012. This “State of OER review” reports on a variety of OER definitions over the past fifteen years, reviews production models of OER and touts its benefits. Perhaps the most historically significant section is the Challenges of OER, where the authors unpack five sweeping issues: discovery, sustainability, quality, localization, and remix. The article concludes that these obstacles must be overcome if OER is going to fulfill its potential.

Key Points

The definition of open is well-traveled for a term still in its initiatory stages.

1. Wiley (2010) – Open is a matter of cost and copyright – 4 (now 5) Rs.
2. Wenk (2010) – Open means the freedom to use, study, redistribute and change.
3. Patricial, del Rocio & Elizabeth (2010) – Open means having the term “open license” in the definition.
4. Tuomi (2006) – Open means having levels of openness in the definition.
5. In practice open refers to things under the Creative Commons license

OER Research indicates that there are multiple models of sharing and producing OER, in addition to multiple benefits and almost as many challenges to the implement of OER.

- Models of sharing OER: There are multiple methods of sharing OER; it can be shared as a single resource, a textbook or courseware. Sharing in “recognizable” chunks makes adoption smoother for faculty.
- Models of producing OER: Conversely, there are also multiple methods of creating OER, such as Institutional (MIT OCW), which can be prohibitively expensive to create as well as to maintain, or Commons-base, such as Wikipedia.
- Benefits of OER:
 - Institutions/faculty
 - Mission aligned – public outreach, especially in public universities
 - Makes course development faster and easier
 - PR – attention, relationships with partners
 - Internal publishing and production
 - Influences students to attend
 - Increases revenue through distance education
 - More cost-effective for students

- Challenges for OER:
- Discovery – combated through refractories, indexes, metadata, recommender systems sustainability – suggestions include donations, and charging for some parts.
- Quality – “you-get-what-you-pay-for mentality” and difficulties finding the high quality OER. Mitigated by user assigned ratings, though this created problems of perspective.
- Localization – OER is licensed so that users can remix it, but there is no way of knowing if they will have the skills to do so. People from outside a given culture don’t have the context to remix properly
- Remix – people are rarely remixing. Reuse can be difficult when design/pedagogical assumptions are not clear.

The future of OER looks promising as more nations are joining the OER effort. There are also some gaps that need to be filled in open assessment, a wide open frontier that needs to be explored.

Discussion Questions

1. Should open assessment be in its own repository or in a package with resources? Why?
2. What is the best way to remove barriers to OER?
3. What are three things you can do today to inspire someone to use OER?

Additional Resources

OER Commons <https://www.oercommons.org/>

Connexions <http://cnx.org/>



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