Turning a Resource into an Open Educational Resource (OER)

Introduction

On open educational resource (OER) is a type of educational resource, typified by being released with an *open* licence. Such a licence means that the resource can be shared without a fee or royalty being due, with the exact terms of reuse being stipulated by the specific open licence used. This makes it easier for others to reuse a resource since they know how to ensure they are not breaking copyright law.

Turning a Resource into an OER

In order to turn a pre-existing resource into an OER several steps must be gone through. These include steps which will enable potential users to find the resource and also checks to minimise the chances of future legal challenges, important since the resource once released will be available to a wide audience and virtually impossible to take back out of circulation.

Accessibility

As with all educational resources it is necessary to ensure the work meets the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), in so much as 'reasonable adjustments' have been made to make the resource accessible. A record should be kept of the decisions made, should a challenge be made in the future.

IPR

Ownership of the IPR of the resource needs to be established, including for all material used in the resource (e.g. photographs, video clips, logos) before the resource can be released as an OER. Where any element of the resource is owned by a third party, written permission for its use needs to be sought and, when received, recorded in a 'rights register'. If this is not granted then this material needs to be removed. It should then be replaced by a suitable alternative for which permission for use has been granted. Fortunately, there are sources of material with an open licence which may be useful in this context.

Metadata

In order for the potential user of the resource to find it, it is helpful to include metadata. Metadata is data about the resource, such as the author's name, the date the resource was created and keywords, which may not be present in the resource itself. Users looking for OER will have a greater chance of finding what they are looking for if metadata is included. Depending on the type of OER, metadata may be added directly to the resource and/or added when the OER is shared (see Sharing).

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What you need to do

Accessibility

Check to make sure you have made reasonable adjustments to the resource to make it accessible, both in terms of its content and format.

Document your decisions in case of challenges in the future.

IPR

Establish ownership of the resource's intellectual property rights (IPR).

For third-party material, if it does not have an open license of its own, obtain written permission from the owners for its use within an OER.

Where permission cannot be obtained, remove the material and, where possible, replace with an alternative with an open licence or for which permission for use has be obtained.

Keep a written 'rights record' of all permissions given in case of challenges in the future.

Metadata

Add metadata directly to the resource where possible including details of the IPR of any third-party material used.

Metadata may also need to be added when the resource is shared through a repository or other system.

Open Licensing

Add a suitable open licence to the resource with permission of the owner(s) of the resource's IPR.

Sharing

Share the OER using open repositories and Web 2.0 sites.

Further Information

For information on making reasonable adjustments visit JISC TechDis:
http://www.techdis.ac.uk/getprojectsupport

For information on how to make documents accessible see JISC TechDis Accessibility Essentials:
http://www.techdis.ac.uk/index.php?p=3_20

For information on IPR visit JISC Legal:
http://www.jisclegal.ac.uk/Default.aspx?tabid=463
or see the JISC SCA IPR Toolkit:
http://sca.jiscinvolve.org/files/2009/10/sca_ipr_toolkit-v2-01_intro.pdf

For access to several search facilities for open licensed materials visit the Creative Commons website:
http://search.creativecommons.org/

For examples of metadata added directly to documents see the OER released through the Skills for Scientists OER Project:
http://open.jorum.ac.uk/ search for *sfsoer*

More detailed information on metadata is available from JISC Digital Media:
http://www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/crossmedia/advice/an-introduction-to-metadata/

Creative Commons (CC) is a specific type of open licence which lends itself well to most types of resource. More information, and the opportunity to generate and download CC licences, can be found on their website at:
http://creativecommons.org/

OpenDOAR provides a directory of open repositories at:
http://www.opendoar.org/

JorumOpen, the open repository part of Jorum, can be found at:
http://open.jorum.ac.uk

A search through the web will reveal the vast number of Web 2.0 sites available, or try a Web 2.0 directory site such as:
http://www.go2web20.net/

Web2Access gives information on the relative accessibility of different Web 2.0 sites:
http://www.web2access.org.uk/

Briefing papers are designed to provide a condensed discussion on issues and topics related to teaching and learning in the physical sciences. Each guide focuses on a particular aspect of higher education and is written by an academic experienced in that field.

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Open Licensing

There are several types of open licence, for instance Creative Commons and GNU. All enable sharing of resources without payment of a royalty or fee. Some are specifically made for types of resources e.g. software. All enable the licensor to stipulate what is permissible in terms of reuse, for instance if the resource must not be changed in any way. The licensing has to be done by or with permission of the resource's IPR holder. The licence should be added to the resource so that users can see the terms on which they can make use of the resource e.g. whether they can make changes to it before reusing it.

Sharing

The point of creating an OER is to share it. This can be done in different ways:

Repositories

Open repositories that host OER are a natural choice. Some are created by institutions to host their own resources; some specialise in types of resource (e.g. theses) or work on particular themes or from specific disciplines. Some are more general in nature. Uploading an OER to an open repository will increase the chances of that resource being found. Additional metadata may be asked for at the point it is deposited.

Web 2.0

An alternative to using a repository is using one of the many (and ever increasing number of) so called Web 2.0 sites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube, SlideShare.) Like repositories, these may be geared towards sharing materials on a particular theme or of a particular file type (e.g. video, photographs). Again, additional metadata may be asked for when the resource is deposited. Uploading to popular sites can potentially put OER in front of a wide audience.

Other

An OER can also be uploaded to any other suitable website that will host it. Having an OER on the web is only part of its dissemination, it is still important to tell those who may wish to reuse it of its availability.

Practical advice on all aspects of producing OER can be found on the STEM Guidance wiki: http://stemoer.pbworks.com/

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