

Supporting Open Educational Resources

I'd like to talk with you today about Open Educational Resources (OERs) and the opportunity they present for Penn State Public Media.

OERs have been an international movement now for about 12 years, when a group of educators met in Capetown, South Africa, to discuss what they saw as an emerging opportunity to extend learning resources globally by sharing online content and, thus, improving quality and reducing cost. Their “Capetown Declaration” defined OERs this way:

Educators worldwide are developing a vast pool of educational resources on the Internet, open and free for all to use . . . These resources include openly licensed course materials, lesson plans, textbooks, games, software, and other materials that support teaching and learning. They contribute to making education more accessible, especially where money for learning materials is scarce. They also nourish the kind of participatory culture of learning, creating, sharing and cooperation that rapidly changing knowledge societies need.

More than 2,900 institutions around the world have endorsed the “Capetown Declaration” over the past 12 years.

Here in the U.S., the Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources (CCCOER) was formed in 2007 to promote “the awareness and adoption of open educational policies, practices, and resources. We believe that these practices will expand student access to education while supporting academic freedom and faculty choice of openly licensed curriculum materials.” It includes “hundreds of colleges in 27 US states and 2 Canadian provinces. CCCOER is part of the global [Open Education Consortium](#).”

Creative Commons, a global nonprofit organization, was created to provide free, easy-to-use copyright licenses -- a simple and standardized way to give the public permission to share and use creative works of all kinds.

OERs have potential to greatly enhance the education and training experiences in our schools—where they can be used by teachers to enrich the classroom environment, in colleges and universities, and in workplaces and even the home. In some cases, they might be used as stand-alone learning modules. In others, they can serve as tools for instructors to use with students.

PROPOSAL: Penn State Public Media will become the primary interface between the university and the community for the distribution of OERs created by Penn State. This will provide a single point of contact for free distribution of OERs developed by Public Media, the World Campus, Penn State academic units, research dissemination units, and Outreach units. Creating this interface will strengthen Public Media's role as a central University resources in a time of rapidly changing technology. It will open new opportunities for collaboration with academic units. It will also strengthen our ability to work with key community organizations—schools, libraries, and employers.

WPSU already has created a number of OER-type products through its digital production service. In some cases, it has also made OERs available nationally. Penn State would benefit from having a single interface with the community as OERs become more popular. This would not in any way limit the ability of an academic unit to create its own OERs, but would ensure that all OERs have proper licensing and are presented to the community. I believe the time is here to build on the work that WPSU has already done and to provide a university-wide OER interface.

The first step: Establish an Educational Resources website off the main Public Media site to provide a single point of access to Public Media materials. Then, make the case that this single point can also provide an effective point of entry for all of Penn State's open educational resources.