

Open Educational Resources



The next big bang or the last little whimper?

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Lessons from cosmology

- From an extremely compacted singular point in empty space, says Stephen Hawking, came forth our universe in a massive explosion that released a deluge of debris into the empty space around it. From that point, the universe expanded and continues to expand exponentially. This is called the Big Bang.
- Will this process reverse?
- This is my starting point.

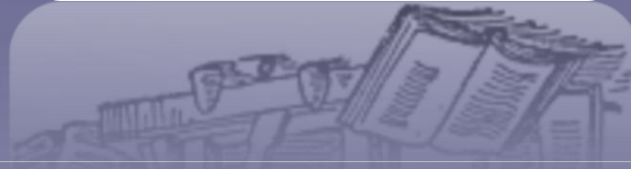
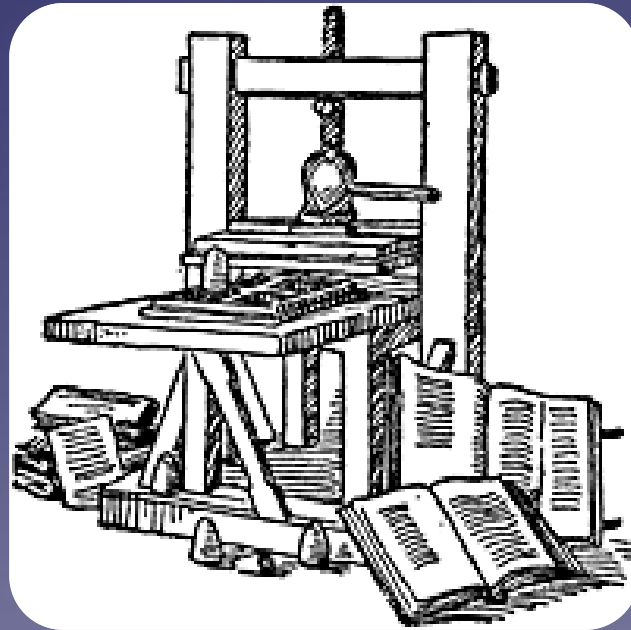




PARCHMENT

Brief history of technology with pictures

Gutenberg Printing Press



Paper, wow!



From ink to biro



From paper, pens and ink to PC

From



paper, pens and ink



to



computers



From firewalls to open hearths and hearts

<http://en.wikipedia.org/>

<http://en.wiktionary.org/>

<http://en.wikinews.org/>

A logical progression leading where?



From university to open resources

- Peer 2 Peer University is a grassroots open education project that organizes learning outside of institutional walls and gives learners recognition for their achievements. P2PU creates a model for lifelong learning alongside traditional formal higher education. Leveraging the internet and educational materials openly available online, P2PU enables high-quality low-cost education opportunities. P2PU - learning for everyone, by everyone about almost anything.



More facts

- The Open Educational Resources movement is only 9 years old
- it began in 2001 when the Hewlett and Mellon Foundations sponsored the MIT initiative
- MIT today provides 1,700 open access courses, virtually their entire curriculum



Another astounding fact

- *More than one-third of the world's population is under 20. There are over 30 million people today qualified to enter a university who have no place to go. During the next decade, this 30 million will grow to 100 million. To meet this staggering demand, a major university needs to be created each week.*
- —Sir John Daniel, 1996 (note the date: 14 years ago!)



An opinion



- It is unlikely that sufficient resources will be available to build enough new campuses to meet the growing global demand for higher education—at least not the sort of campuses that we have traditionally built for colleges and universities. Nor is it likely that the current methods of teaching and learning will suffice to prepare students for the lives that they will lead in the twenty-first century (Minds on Fire, John Seely Brown and Richard Adler).
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Some necessary spade work

- Hylén (2005) defines OER initiatives as
 - open courseware and content;
 - open software tools (e.g. learning management systems);
 - open material for e-learning capacity building of staff;
 - repositories of learning objects; and
 - free educational courses.
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Which can we tick?

- Open courseware and content (freely available already from MIT, OU, Yale, P2P, and Wikiversity)
- $\sqrt{\sqrt{}}$



Open software and LMS?

- MyUnisa✓
- Audacity✓
- Googledocs✓
- Mozilla Firefox✓
- Dropbox✓
- Skype✓



Open materials for elearning and capacity building

- ?
- They are there but do we use them?



Repositories

- $\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{}}}}$
- Unisa Library
- MyUnisa



Free educational courses

- Not from our side ×



Open courseware consortia

- The China Open Resources for Education organization (CORE) translates MIT courses and develops their own
 - The Japanese OCW Collaboration Group
 - Universias – 720 colleges and universities in Spain, Latin America and Portugal which have translated MIT courses into Spanish and Portuguese
 - Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health – educating tomorrow's scientist and health practitioners through OCW
 - Open library collections at Harvard
 - Digital repository at Unisa Library
 - OER Africa
 - And many more
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United Nations University online conference on OER: On the Re-use of Open Educational Resources (OER) in Higher Education in Africa

- What hinders the promotion of OER?
 - Is content the issue, or rather the regulations and systems?
 - What role do institutions play in the promotion of OER?
 - Does the creation of institutional OER give incentives to individual OER content developers?
 - Are there clear policies on the use and reuse of OER in the context of Higher Education?
 - What are the most inspiring and useful OER initiatives from around the world?
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So is there a downside, a whimper?

- Staff at institutions in developing countries have problems gaining access to high-speed internet connections and downloads take a huge amount of time.
 - Often, one cannot download only what one needs from an OCW site and one has to download the entire course.
 - A one way street – the US comes to Africa flying the imperial flag.
 - Are OERs really free
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How sustainable?

- Before answering this question, let us ask about the financial implications and sustainability of paper-based products including journal articles in journals managed by publishers that charge for publication.
 - What is the readership of a journal article or of a thesis?
 - Apart from your mother?
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A serious question

Stephen Downes correctly raises the question of OERs' sustainability. If, for example, Unisa were to enable a certain percentage of its courses as open resources, what would the cost be in real terms and would this matter?



Open
Educational
Resources

- Walker (2005) agrees that the production of open educational resources entails a large scale investment but adds an important dimension - perhaps 'sustainable' in the context of a social good means 'capable of promoting wider objectives'.



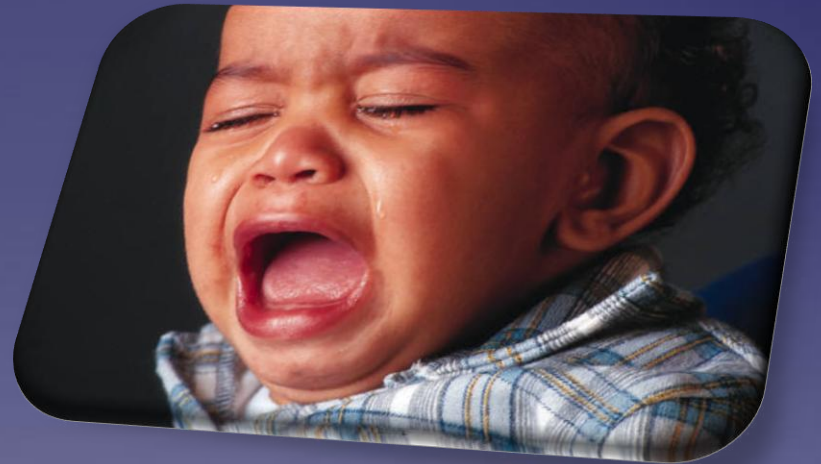
- Another issue: is knowledge a commodity?
- We certainly talk about “producing knowledge” which implies that we are involved in a mode of production and still belong in the Fordist era. Our study guides, our lectures, even our ideas, are like so many factory models on the production line.

In contrast

- *The Open Courseware concept is based on the philosophical view of knowledge as a collective social product and so it is also desirable to make it a social property. - V. S. Prasad, Vice-Chancellor - Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University, India*
 - *Ambedkar speaks about knowledge as a product but as a social one, a product that becomes a shared public property.*
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Turn the whimper into a shout

- Make the one-way street and two way communication.
- Take Africa to the world.
- Let Unisa begin.



Not just a one way street

- The real vision for OER is the sharing in all directions of resources and approaches to teaching, not just North to South.



The soft issues

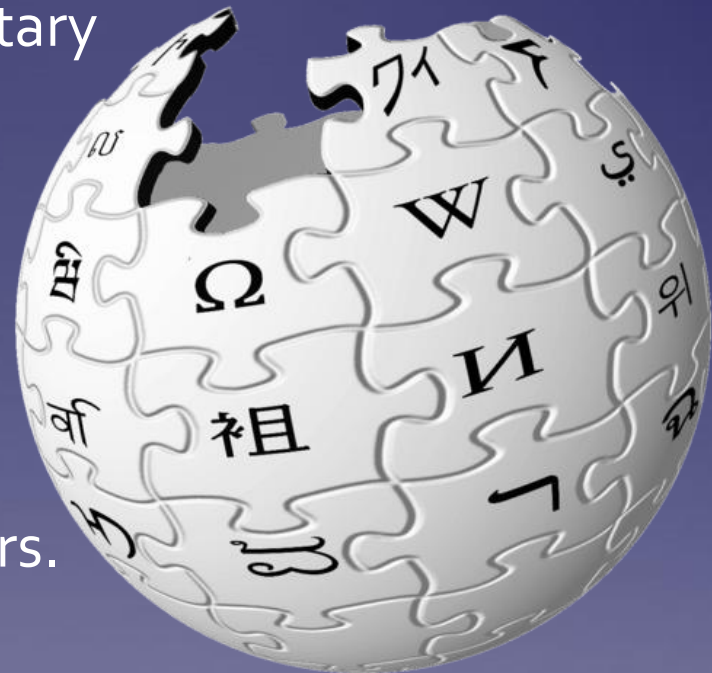
- MIT (MIT OpenCourseWare, 2005) states ^[1] "It is **an ideal** that **flows** from the MIT Faculty's **passionate** belief in the MIT mission, based on the **conviction** that the open dissemination of knowledge and information can **open new doors** to the **powerful** benefits of education for humanity around the world.^[2]
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- Cannot divorce the technological advances in the world from ethical and cultural shifts in human awareness;
- We are moving away from closed systems and ownership to a different paradigm and like the point of singularity in the universe it seems as this is unstoppable and expansive requiring a mind-shift in all of us.



A different sort of model

- The power of sharing and the wisdom of crowds.
- Wikipedia relies on the voluntary contributions of millions of people
- Peer to Peer university provides courses by volunteers.



WIKIPEDIA
The Free Encyclopedia

Just a thought

- As I write this, a slow walk from the University of the Witwatersrand to Constitution Hill is beginning in protest against the proposed Protection of Information act.
- At a time in South Africa where freedom of speech is under greatest threat, let us not subject digital freedom to the same indignity.



- The current generation thinks differently. They don't buy music, they download it. They watch TV and movies on their 3G phones. They do research via Google. They seldom buy books. They network all the time in short phrases in a language of their own. Do we resist or follow?



Digital freedoms that have changed my life

- Google
- Wikipedia
- Digital journals
- Journal articles that are freely available (sometimes only to fortunate users such as Unisa staff) on the internet
- Music downloads (legal but only just)
- Free and open news from anywhere in the world on my iphone



The next logical and ethical step?

- Sharing the privilege of knowledge with everyone



