

Open Educational Social Media Content Groups and Networks within the Arts, Design & Media Education.

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Abstract

This paper presents two case study perspectives of the role of open technologies in encouraging sharing and reuse of open content from SCORE fellows Sarah Atkinson and Chris Follows.

Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and Institutional repositories are rarely built to support social media content communities, as a result many learning and teaching materials are being independently dispersed across the web using more familiar and everyday user friendly web 2.0 environments. Good quality learning material are being produced and shared either internally hidden away in VLEs or lost in locally shared group blogs, these resources often become dormant and lost as the onus is often placed on one person 'the teacher' to administer and develop this content alone, some content never leaves the classroom/studio. There is currently no middle ground within our institutional networks to facilitate the development of OER content communities. How can open educational social media content groups and networks support the process of cultural change and OER stewardship in new alternative open pedagogic practices for artists, teachers, students and practitioners?

The University of the Arts London (UAL) aims to develop a sustainable approach to open educational practice through the ongoing agile development of existing 'open educational social media content groups and networks'.

Case study one process.arts: This case study explores the creative and educational potential, challenges, limitations and benefits of use and reuse of open educational rich media content. The paper focuses on UAL's experience of developing <http://process.arts.ac.uk/> and its involvement and integration with the wider arts sector and the open movement through SCORE fellowship research, [ALTO & ALTO UK](#) (JISC UK OER programme) and the [DIAL](#) project (digital Integration into arts learning) part of the JISC UK Developing digital literacies programme.

Case study two SP-ARK: SP-ARK is an interactive online project based on the multi-media archive of filmmaker Sally Potter. The archive includes the intuitive visual navigation of films and all of their related assets. Users are able to view and annotate materials using the sites 'pathways' feature, other users are then able to access the annotated pathways, which lead to a deeper engagement with the materials. The case study seeks to draw out the benefits and efficiencies of collaborative resource generation, exploring the challenges of sustainability and expansion of both the resources and the encompassing user-group community.

Keywords

collaboration, reuse, repurpose, open, resources, practice, OER, open educational resources, process arts, sharing, open educational resources, content communities, SCORE, process.arts, University of the arts London, University of Brighton, SP-ARK

1. **Case study one process.arts:**
Open educational social media content groups and networks at UAL

Through SCORE, ALTO, ALTO UK and DIAL, UAL have begun to explore the pace of technological change and its impact on the day-to-day practices of staff and students at UAL and the wider sector. Maintaining progressive practice in these new digitally enhanced learning spaces can present new expectations, anxieties and challenges for all. The [ALTO eco system](#) OER environment for example consists of a basic repository ([ALTO file/content store](#)) and a dynamic agile Web 2.0 online studio space (<http://process.arts.ac.uk/>) which together provide UAL with a working OER infrastructure to support the development and practice of open education.

The problem of OER reuse remains consistently on the agenda for the movement as a whole. For some subjects the proliferation of open content resources in specific subject areas has made finding useful and quality content for use and reuse easier, although has also presented new challenges regarding search and find and surfacing content in the right places. New OER tools and websites are not enough to develop and sustain progressive open educational practice at UAL, cultural change and ongoing open educational ‘stewardship’ maybe a fundamental requirement.

1.1 FAST OER search and find

One of the key challenges for open practice and research for teachers and students is finding or being directed to the useful open content. Google searches will produce some relevant resources but there are more risks in terms of the quality of the content and the re-usability of the resource. Finding resources for use in art and design teaching is difficult, and even advanced searches in Google take time and may return little or no usable open content. The same search in centralised OER repositories would provide high quantity of appropriate results but within a very narrow ‘local’ field of view. There is a strong argument for a ‘national’ centralised subject specific OER repository; however in the current financial climate the long term sustainability of such a resource is questionable. A centralised service could also be seen as insufficiently addressing the needs of particular universities and subjects. Many courses within Universities wish to manage, develop and host their own bespoke OER environments as far as possible, in preference to going outside and submitting to national repositories.

1.2 <http://process.arts.ac.uk/> An OER social media content community website

process.arts has been built using an open sources drupal (<http://drupal.org/>) platform, the site provides a user-friendly interface, rich media tools for uploading and sharing user generated content, forums, groups and easy integration with other Web 2.0 environments. The site is an ongoing agile development project and provides an open online space for staff, students and the wider community to discuss and develop resources and open education. **process.arts** is an example of a subject specific agile web development platform for art and design OER. The platform relays fully on community participation to support and steer its development. **process.arts** was created at UAL in 2008 through a short 10 day secondment, the project has since continued to develop and integrate within UAL systems through mostly voluntary means. Although supported by UAL through small development incentives and free server space the project has never been officially classed a UAL service, although we are hopeful this will change in the future as the open educational movement becomes more established at UAL.

Art colleges like UAL may prefer to publish and manage their OER content in-house, **process.arts** is a working prototype example of this. The ALTO UK project team have been in discussions with two other arts institutions and they are potentially interested in installing their own local drupal **process.arts** installation, stripped out and designed and branded to fit into the institution. If more locally managed OER websites begin to be established there could be a need for new tools and standards for creating an ‘all-in-one’ OER single subject specific

search environments, which ‘plug’ into and cluster various stand alone subject specific OERs, websites and archives spread across many different locally managed platforms. A single search environment could enable users to search and find high quality OER content quickly and efficiently from a broad subject-related field. The OER content creators will be better able to surface their content locally and nationally within a focused federated environment with minimal effort.

1.3 The future

The overall concept of **process.arts** is to provide a locally managed hybrid social and educational media platform that integrates teaching and practice; we aim to develop an open online environment where people ‘want’ to be as apposed to ‘have’ to be. The motivations for wanting to be in this space are still being explored, its clear through our open practice focus groups and general research feedback at UAL that many staff and students are not familiar, clear or comfortable with the notion of ‘being open’ in their day-to-day practice, it remains a step to far for a vast majority of staff.

Developing new OER online communities and groups also raises many questions: what qualifies a community a group, how do we classify a community, groups or individuals, who are the core members and who are the periphery members? Are they communities or Individuals with a common interest, who come together around objects and ideas, common outlooks? UAL are currently exploring the development of the group dynamic, participation and measure of success.

1.4 How can we bring about changes in belief and attitude?

It’s important to understand existing cultures before introducing new cultures. It’s easy for educational developers or OER specialists to lose touch or truly understand the needs and practices of its stakeholders. The role of open technologies in encouraging sharing and reuse of open content can only become a reality if the open technologies are being developed with and for the stakeholders involved. There cannot be one OER fix for all.

1.6 Relationships between teaching and practice

To support our understanding of the meaning of ‘practice’ in the context of open educational practice and art and design, we can reference Shreeve’s (2008) five categories of practice:

Category 1: *Dropping in.* There is an asymmetrical relationship between practice and teaching with the focus on practice. Knowledge from practice is seen as being passed on to the student.

Category 2: *Moving across* There is an asymmetrical relationship between practice and teaching with the focus on teaching. Knowledge from practice is used in teaching students.

Category 3: *Two Camps* There is a symmetrical relationship between practice and teaching, but they are seen as two different and separate things and tension exists between them. Knowledge from practice is used in teaching students.

Category 4: *Balancing.* There is a symmetrical relationship between practice and teaching with a fluid exchange of knowledge between both.

Category 5: *Integrating.* There is a holistic relationship between practice and teaching. There is an elision between practice and teaching knowledge and they become one and the same thing.

1.7 Art practice and openness (the arts practitioner)

The examples below reflect a specific perspective of an arts practitioner although art, design and media subjects at UAL reflect a greater variety of subjects from fashion, design, media, theatre and performance; the core challenges of public facing practice are common to most. At UAL as with other art colleges tutors, academics and technicians are all Art and Design practitioners and specialists in their field of practice. They are familiar with notions of sharing their ideas and publishing, exhibiting, performing and showing their work and concepts in public. Exhibitions/shows/art events for example are often accompanied by educational/academic research insights or information about the work e.g. the artist talk, sketchbooks, studio video interviews, audio guides, handouts, websites and books etc.

1.8 The artist's studio

The dynamics of a shared artist studio environment complex are similar to that of a college environment, it provides a personal space to work and a communal space to share ideas and interact with fellow practitioners on a daily basis. The 'open studio' are also a good example of practitioners sharing their practice in public, once or twice a year 'solitary' arts studio spaces are opened to the world, the public are invited into the artist domain to see how and where they work, there are varying degrees of openness:

- Some literally open their doors so visitors see the unedited 'real life' day-to-day working environments,
- Some tidy and curate their spaces so they can hide and surface specific content they want to be viewed,
- Others present their spaces as a white cube exhibition removing all traces of the studio activity and practice,
- Some choose to not open their doors; what lies behind the door is a mystery to all.

The open studios could be seen as a good analogy for how staff may approach degrees of openness in their teaching practice, what can the outsider, student or colleagues see or understand about our teaching practice, is it important? From an A4 paper handout to internal VLE resources to copyrighted online open resources to creative commons open resources to copyleft resources. How do we open the doors to our pedagogic practice and use open technologies to demystify the teaching process?

1.9 Conclusion

Externalising courses and resources specifically practice based courses like Fine Art painting and sculpture for example could be seen as a tricky proposition, what actually happens on a Fine Art course? To the outsider it can seem a bit of a mystery, like the closed studio door. Could making a Fine Art course open be seen as destroying its mystery or does '*The teaching as mystery metaphor*' as Brookfield, S. (1995) suggests: "*excuses teachers from having to answer such basic questions as 'how do you know when you are teaching well?', 'how do you know your students are learning?' and 'how could your practice be made more responsive?'*" *Seeing teaching as mysterious works against the improvement of practice. If good or bad teaching are all a matter of chance then there is no point trying to do better. The teaching as mystery metaphor also closes down the possibility of teachers sharing knowledge, insights, and informal theories of practice since mystery is, by definition, incommunicable.*" In the current competitive climate for attracting students on courses, externalising the inner workings of course may quickly become an essential practice.

1.10 Open anxieties

To support a potential mass transition into the 'open' and to provide a sustainable framework to address and support students and staff in the new open world could educational social media content networks like **processarts** provide the open local subject specific support a

Tank film, *Knowledge Is...*, despite the leading investments of JISC and others worldwide, only 5% of our audiovisual history is digitized and available to educators and the public online' (2011:3). The recent film review undertaken by the Department of Media, Culture and Sport in the UK concludes: 'The percentage of material readily accessible by the public in National and Regional Archives remains very small in proportion to the size of the collections. Most of the film material held in archives around the UK is owned by rights-holders who understandably will only make their material available in a way that is consistent with their commercial interests [...] The material which is held in the UK's archives offers a wealth of opportunities for audiences; for users to appreciate its intrinsic cultural and artistic value, for people to learn about the world both as it is, and has been, through film, and to stimulate new creative work (especially in a digital age where legal repurposing of clips could drive innovation). But a set of interventions is needed to tackle the huge challenges around access and conservation, including intellectual property barriers, to ensure that these opportunities can be realised to the benefit of audiences throughout the UK'. (DCMS, 2012: 75). There are a limited number of disparate and disassociated online repositories and databases, which house the culturally rich resources of filmmaking and cinema across the globe. In the UK, the only known openly accessible online version of such an archive is SP-ARK. Internationally, in Japan the entire archive of prolific Director Akira Kurosawa has been uploaded and is freely available to view, access and download online, but is only currently available in the Japanese language. These exemplars are invaluable and enriching resources within film and cinema education, since in their exposure of all the materials related to a film production; photographs, video assist footage, casting recordings, scripts, storyboards and developmental paperwork, they reveal the often hidden creative practices of fictional filmmaking. As Mayer contends in relation to SP-ARK; 'It reflects the dailiness of labour involved in filmmaking as opposed to the heroic narrative portrayed in mainstream films' (2008:201). Within educational contexts, the access to such primary resources facilitates the close textual analysis and in-depth examination of films, practices that could not be achieved without such access. Such resources also have the potential to provide unique and unprecedented sites for communication, collaboration and the establishment of both online and physical networks. As the DCMS report highlighted, it is the key issue of licensing that appears to be foreclosing the development of open access to film and cinema resources.

2.2 SP-ARK

The SP-ARK archive provides a unique example of the successful marriage between the principles of open educational resources and open archives. SP-ARK is an interactive online project based on the multi-media archive of filmmaker Sally Potter. Potter is a world-renowned film director, known for her explorations into the potential of nascent technologies to enhance audience engagement and participation in her work. Her 2009 film *Rage* was the first feature film to be launched and distributed on mobile phones. Over the past five years, the archive has been developed to a Beta-testing level, and includes the intuitive visual navigation of one of Potter's films, *Orlando* (1992), and all of the related assets. All of the resources have been digitised and meta-data has been added relating to the items description and association with other assets. The copyright to all of the materials belongs to *Adventure Pictures*, and they have chosen to allow access and use of the materials via a Creative Commons licensing model. Users are able to view clips from the film as well as a myriad of associated materials including the scripts, storyboards, still images, location and developmental paperwork, using the intuitive visual browsing interface (see Figure 1 and section 2.4 for further technical details). Resources are initially organised in a linear taxonomy which aligns with the sequence of the film production process; Development, Preproduction, Production, Postproduction, Finished Film and Distribution (see the indexical sidebar in Figure 1). The materials within these processes are then organised within further drop-down subsections. Once an asset is opened, users are then able to continue browsing the archive in a non-linear and exploratory fashion by linking to the asset's 'related items' (for

every item is linked to other associated items) for example, a page of script is linked to its corresponding clip, which could then be linked to a call sheet, a continuity report, production design images, location notes etc.

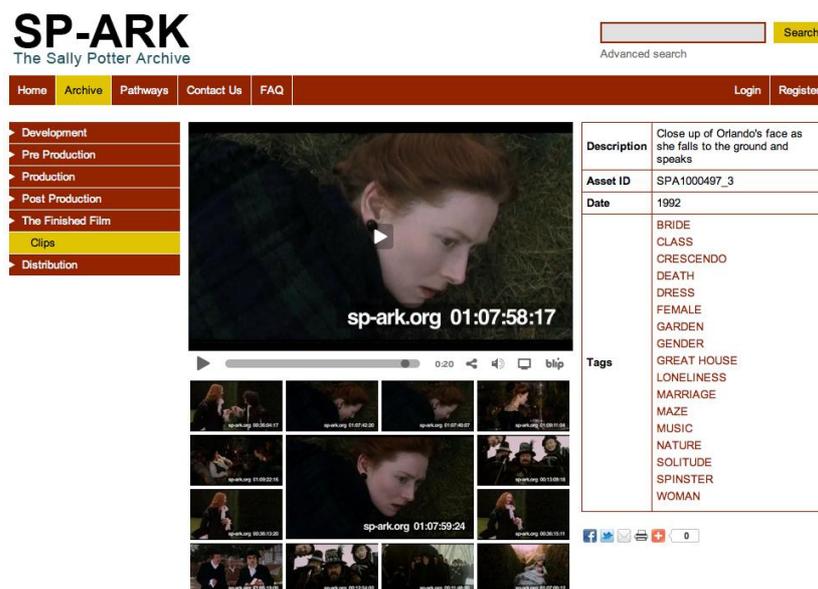


Figure 1. The SP-ARK Visual Browsing Interface

2.3 Pathways

This mode of browsing allows the user to build his or her own unique ‘pathway’ through the archive’s content as they explore a particular theme or process; they are able to save items that they have viewed. This type of archival browsing which is embedded into the infrastructure of the site is not so easy to achieve through the boxed presentation of materials within a traditional physical archive. This intuitive browsing is extended and supported by the fact that users are able to annotate each individual item in their pathway, with their own comments, observations and streams of thought, as well as to describe and save the pathway itself. Other users are then able to access each other’s pathways (when they click on an item all associated pathways are displayed) and to link to them which offer a further level of user-led archival exploration. Users are also able to directly communicate with one another using the messaging tool. This type of interaction leads to the deeper engagement with the materials, encourages the sharing of ideas and practices, and fosters the creation of a user-community around the archive’s content. The SP-ARK resource exemplifies the successful combination of an archive and an educational resource within this feature, providing a unique model for social and participatory learning. The benefits that such a resource can bring to higher education academics and students are invaluable and as yet unprecedented. The pathways tool lends itself to the critical and analytical study of primary materials as intrinsic to both undergraduate and postgraduate study within numerous disciplines. The successful development and organization of such a resource has the potential to enhance and enrich teaching and learning practices within these disciplines, as well as to encourage other high-profile filmmakers and organizations to allow online access to their work in the future. Dr Charles Drazin has already used the pathways feature as an assessment tool on the Film Studies Programme at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL). The students were set a discussion topic through which they had to construct their answer within a pathway rather than a traditional essay format. Drazin noted that ‘from a teacher’s perspective what was great about the site was to be able easily to visit students’ pathways and to see their thoughts take shape. It facilitated the provision of on-going feedback as students worked on their assignment in a way that is not feasible in traditional coursework’. In addition, students of the exercise also responded positively. The assets that the students identified, along with content

of the pathway could then be used as OERs themselves; as envisaged by the OER impact study suggesting ‘validating the sharing of online resources discovered by students’ (JISC, 2011: 25).

2.3 Visual Browser

The latest version of SP-ARK incorporates a visual browser which was designed and integrated as part of a Knowledge Transfer Partnership between *Adventure Pictures* and the Essex University’s Department of Literature, Film and Theatre Studies and the University of Surrey’s Centre for Vision, Speech and Signal Processing. Full explications can be read in Ren, Sarvas and Čalić (2010).

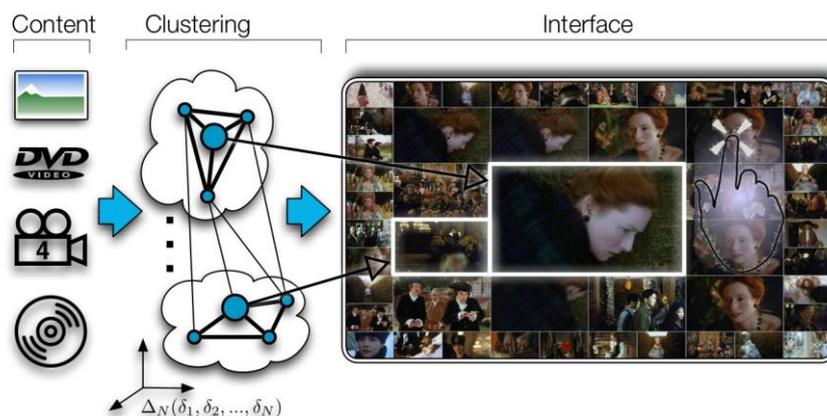


Figure 2. Block scheme of the interactive image browsing system

The visual browser comprises two modules: an image clustering engine, that derives the underlying structure of the database, and a hierarchical interactive interface depicted in the Figure 2. The size of every image in a generated interface layout is proportional to its similarity to the central image. The choice of the similarity metric is invariant to the type of clustering engine and/or the interface design, enabling generic application of this system. In case of SP-ARK visual browser, a chi-square distance between three-dimensional RGB colour histograms was utilized as the similarity measure. The shots were represented by a set of key-frames efficiently extracted using a method for video summarisation introduced by Čalić et.al (2007).

2.5 Conclusions & Next Steps

This case study will go on to test and report upon the educational potential of such an open resource within the fields of media and film theory and practice. The case study will include the facilitation of focus groups with students and staff at various universities. The focus groups will be used to demonstrate, explore and evaluate the potential of the archive as a teaching, learning and assessment device; and to collaboratively generate, develop and share open educational resources around the content of the archive. Currently, in addition to QMUL, students from Bucknell University, Pennsylvania USA studying Film and Media Studies and students on the Historiography course at the New York University are actively engaging with the archive. Their assessments are related to creating critically informed thematic reflections using the Pathways tool.

I have also devised a collaborative project with *Adventure Pictures*, which is currently underway. *The Anatomy of a Film Set: Exposing the people, the roles, the processes and the careers on set of Bomb* will create an interactive audiovisual ecology of a film set, capturing all of the individual crewmembers contributions to the creation of the film through personal testimony. This is a unique and unprecedented opportunity to open access to a notoriously closed area. The project exposes *all* the roles on set from runners and caterers to camera,

sound, costume, make-up, continuity, set builders, sparks, extras to heads of all the departments. This will be presented as an interactive computer application whereby the anatomy of the film set is presented in visual form so that the user can intuitively access the video diaries, photos and testimonies. This will be an invaluable and innovative resource for young people and students seeking careers in the film industry, and to educators and academics teaching film production and processes.

These initiatives seek to draw out the benefits and efficiencies of collaborative resource generation, exploring the challenges of sustainability and expansion of both the resources and the encompassing user-group community. The findings of the case study will not only inform the future direction of SP-ARK; an endeavor which has always placed the educational community at the core of its development (initially at the Screen School at Goldsmith's College, see Mayer: 2008) but also has the potential to support and inform the approaches of emerging online film-based repositories as they grapple with the issues of openness, reuse and licensing. The project ultimately provides an innovative example of Higher Education Institution and archive collaboration in action, which could in turn provide a compelling model for the development of open academic practice.

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