Mapping the Landscape of OER Institutional Initiatives

Summary of Week One (12-18 November 2012):
What could an OER world map look like?
Why map the OER landscape? Essential information and visual presentation

Prepared by Sara Frank Bristow, Salient Research

This document provides an overview of key points addressed during week one of the Athabasca-based OER-mapping discussion (https://unescochair.athabascau.ca/oer-mapping-exercise). Please feel free to share it among your colleagues and networks.

1. **Issue One: Why Map the OER Landscape?**

A majority of contributors support the development of a community-generated, geographical map of OER initiatives. Most conversation has focused on the potential benefits to various stakeholders, from learners to policymakers. A global map of OER initiatives may:

- Demonstrate OER’s scope and scale in a simple, visual manner
- Provide an entry point for those outside the movement to learn about OER’s worldwide dimensions and rapid growth
- Augment the OER evidence base, encouraging investment and implementation of public policy
- Build on past efforts to provide overviews of institutional, national and regional projects
- Strengthen the OER community worldwide, reducing perceived “scattering” of initiatives
- Highlight regions in which OER development is needed most
- Improve the visibility of lesser-known, newer initiatives
- Foster collaboration between experienced OER practitioners and newcomers
- Help content developers identify complementary projects and build on good practice
- Enable instructors and learners to find resources
- Generally promote sharing, use, reuse, adaptation, localisation and translation
- Provide a “living example” of OER

A wide range of challenges to a project of this scope are anticipated. The following areas of relevance and logistical concern have been highlighted:

- How to define and classify an “OER initiative”
- That focus on geographical “headquarters” should not eclipse other valuable information, e.g. about funders and global “reach”
- That a comprehensive reporting tool/database might be more useful (a geographical map could be one output of this)
- That conceptual mapping, knowledge mapping or curricular mapping (in lieu of geographical mapping) might be more appropriate
- That any map be open to all, accessible to those with disabilities, and include metadata
- The feasibility of keeping such a map accurate, up-to-date, simple and well organised
- The importance “searchability,” especially if teachers/learners are to use the map directly
2. Issue Two: Essential Information and Visual Presentation

2a. Essential Information

The topic of “essential” information has not been addressed explicitly by many contributors. The most commonly referenced categories in discussions of OER discovery, however, are:

- Country
- Language
- Licensing
- Academic level/sector
- Academic discipline/subject area
- Contact (“OER Expert”)

Other descriptors mentioned (institutional, resource-specific or both) include:

- URL
- Department
- Author(s)
- OER type
- OER quantity
- Credential (if applicable)
- Producer type (single, national, regional, global)
- Whether seeking collaborators
- Funder(s)
- Time marker(s), e.g. date
- Tag(s)

A more formal “essentials” list would require further iteration.

2b. Visual Presentation

The OpenCourseWare Consortium sample map provided (http://oerworldmap.oerknowledgecloud.org/) has been deemed functional; other options for visual presentation have not been discussed in detail.

These related topics have been identified for further examination:

- Mapping initiatives that elude geographical categorisation, e.g. have partners or presence in multiple countries
- Striving to use generally open principles, such as open licensing of visualisations, open APIs and standards (“eating our own dog food”)
- Examining self-reporting tools like those used in the public health community to report outbreaks
- Adding a time dimension, or other ways of highlighting periods and regions of innovation
- Relying on “open innovation,” enabling multiple ways to visualise the same data
- Developing use cases as a first step, to explore who will use the map, and in what context
- Upholding basic principles of good practice in human-computer interaction

3. Week One Conclusions

Discussion so far has been vibrant, with roughly 100 contributors providing a wide range of ideas. That a global map of institutional OER initiatives would be useful seems clear. What constitutes “essential information,” and how this might be visually represented, would benefit from further discussion in the coming week.

This summary © 2012 Sara Frank Bristow, Salient Research. Available under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).