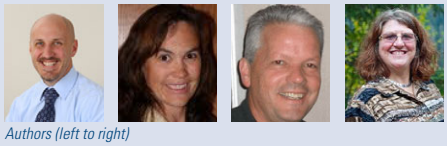
Teaching, Learning, and Sharing Openly Online

W. IAN O'BYRNE, VERENA ROBERTS, RANDY LABONTE, & LEE GRAHAM

Randall Johnson has been teaching English in a remote high school outside of Seattle, Washington for the past 25 years. Randall doesn't consider himself to be digitally literate; however, he always posts teaching and learning materials on his classroom website to allow students to continue learning on their own time. He posts his teaching materials openly on his website to share not only with students, but with other educators in his personal learning network (PLN) and the parents of his students. Randall creates his lesson plans, presentations, rubrics, and exemplars in Google Apps and embeds these on his learning hub. Additionally, his YouTube channel has more than 200 videos of him teaching content for his English class. Most of the more than 300 subscribers to his channel come from outside of the school district in which he teaches. Randall uses Creative Commons licensing on all of his content to indicate the level of sharing and attribution he has given his work.



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Randall has frequent meetings with the Superintendent and school board in his district regarding the teaching and learning content that he is sharing openly online. No other faculty or staff in his small school district blog, use Twitter, or even share their Facebook page publicly. The school district regularly meets with Randall and in the past suggested that he remove all content and stop sharing with his PLN. More recently, the viewpoint of the school district changed as some of the district administration began to understand more and more about the digital identity that Randall is building by creating and sharing content openly online. The district is now interested in ownership of the open education resources (OER) that Randall is building online. They are in the process of hiring legal counsel to help them build a case to force Randall to copy over his content to a website that the school maintains and monetizes. Randall sits in the midst of this wondering how his digital identity is now being merged into the district identity.

Open Learning

Open learning is becoming a critical focus for K-12 technology-supported programs, both those strictly online as well as blended classroom practices extending into online learning environments (Chan et al., 2006; Beetham & Sharpe, 2013). Open learning, also known as open education, can be defined as a set of practices, resources, and scholarship that are openly accessible, free to use and access, and to re-purpose (Bossu & Tynan, 2011; Panke & Seufert, 2013).

As an emerging practice, definitions of open learning are currently being developed that impact aspects of educational learning design, practice, pedagogy, and theory. (For more perspective on the complexities that exist under the heading of "open," please review the upcoming handbook, Open Learning in K-12 Online and Blended Learning

Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy 58(4) Dec 2014 / Jan 2015 doi:10.1002/jaal.365 (pp. 277–280)

Environments (Ferdig & Kennedy, in press)). One fundamental aspect of open learning in K-12 environments includes the organization, sharing, and creation of Open Education Resources (Graham, LaBonte, Roberts, & O'Byrne, in press).

Open Education Resources

OER are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license permitting their free use or re-purposing by others (Atkins, Brown, & Hammond, 2007; Hilton, Wiley, Stein, & Johnson, 2010). They are "learning materials licensed in such a way as to freely permit educators to share, access, and collaborate in order to customize and personalize content and instruction" (Bliss, Tonks, & Patrick, 2013, p. 3). OER include full courses, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, resources, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge (Atkins, Brown, & Hammond,2007).

Creative commons licensing. OER are generally created for educational purposes, and are generally shared under a Creative Commons (CC) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/) in repositories or as stand-alone resources for reuse and repurposing (Atkins et al., 2007). CC licenses broaden rights from copyright holders to others who would like to make use of existing works such as books, courseware, images, video, animations, or other resources that can be freely reused in educational settings (Green & Wiley, 2012). Specifically four areas of practice are covered by CC licenses:

1. Reuse—the right to reuse content in its unaltered, verbatim form;
2. Revise—the right to adapt, adjust, modify or alter the content itself;
3. Remix—the right to combine the original or revised content with other content to create something new; and
4. Redistribute—the right to make and share copies of the original content, revisions, or remixes with others (Wiley, 2010).

OER in the Classroom

There is a growing contingent of K-12 classrooms engaging in the use of open learning and OERs (Cavanaugh, Barbour, & Clark, 2009; Ferdig, 2013; Roberts, 2013). The challenge for educators is that the transitory nature of online information creates a mixed blessing. The Internet can be an empowering tool that allows individuals to create, share, connect, and learn with other like-minded individuals around the globe (Rheingold, 2007; Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009). Conversely, the use of OER in the classroom may provide challenges for educators who want to integrate this valuable resource into their classroom.

Central to the challenges associated with the use of OER in the classroom are questions about the credibility, value, reliability, and permanence of access of these online materials (Zhang, 2001; Salmon, 2004; Chen et al., 2009). Often there is a reticence on the part of K-12 educators and administrators to use and share OER with students (Cavanaugh, Gillian, Kromrey, Hess, & Blomeyer, 2004) as they face challenges about the sourcing, credibility, and changes or revisions to the information presented (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000; Alexander, 2006).

Constructing and Sharing OER in the Classroom

Many school policies are vague, unclear, or generally do not permit students to construct and share digital content openly online (Weaver, 2009; Gervais, 2009). School districts may also be reticent, or explicitly forbid, the publication and presence of educators in online spaces and social media sites (Hobbs, 2006). This mindset by school districts is changing; however, there are still a number of districts who do not favor educators employed by the district producing, publishing, or being overly active on online social networks (Harasim, 1995; Becker, 2000). Yet there continues to exist an opportunity for districts to take a leadership role in encouraging educators to actively produce and publish openly online as they learn with students, parents, and the community (Ito et al., 2013).

A different skill set is necessary as individuals engage in the open creation of content and learning in open environments (Brown & Adler, 2008). As students and educators craft and revise new learning processes and products (Cook-Sather, 2002; Unsworth, 2001), they take a much more active role in their learning (Mayer, 2003; Moreno & Mayer, 2000). Given these new opportunities, there are concerns regarding ownership of content and recognition of intellectual property as students and educators write and share content openly online (Jenkins, 2009). There are unanswered questions about the ownership of intellectual property created within school districts (Levy, 2003; Wheeler, Yeomans, & Whieeier, 2008). Much of the challenge in identifying ownership is due to the fact that it is hard to differentiate between who is the user and who is the producer when it comes to open learning in the classroom (Hylén, 2006).

Benefits of the Use and Sharing of OER in the Classroom

As educators turn to participatory approaches to foster student engagement, individual practices take on various forms, yet all share the potential for individuals to collectively negotiate their learning paths (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007; Jenkins, 2009). To this end, transforming K-12 environments to open learning classrooms that effectively utilize OER requires a sharing, collaborative environment (Bliss et al., 2013). The use of OERs has the potential to help teachers find quality resources while encouraging them to share resources. This curation and sharing promotes dialogue about thoughtful teaching and learning within an educator's PLN. This process often includes a process of open feedback and open editing that helps to further the credibility and validity of the information presented in OERs (Hylén, 2006; Bruns, 2008; Butcher, Kanwar, & Uvalić-Trumbić, 2011). This dialogue and the revised open materials contribute to a more valuable and sustainable PLN.

OERs also have the potential to provide access to resources to any learner regardless of any geographic, economic, or language barriers (Geith & Vignare, 2008; Morgan & Carey, 2009). Finally, providing educators and students with the opportunity to use and create OERs in the classroom empowers them for the digital literacies they will need in the future (Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000; Hobbs & Jensen, 2009; Dede, 2010). This process is enhanced by the understanding of CC licensing and the ability to protect their intellectual property as they build their digital identity (Balkin, 2004; Hargreaves, 2011).

Conclusion

As educators and students continue to read and write open educational resources, more dialogue is needed regarding the challenges and opportunities that exist in these open educational spaces. As stated earlier, Randall does not consider himself to be "digitally literate"; however, he actively shares his content openly online for free because of the value the process holds. He already shares this content with colleagues face-to-face, and now he considers his colleagues to be global, connected learners. By using and sharing OER, he is positively contributing to the dearth of high quality educational resources available openly online. Most of all, Randall is active online because he believes he needs to model the ethical, responsible use of digital content for his students.

Connected educators like Randall need guidance and clear expectations as they use, construct, and share open resources online. Educators, and students for that matter, need to be empowered to act as networked, connected learners as they read, write, and remix online content. As open learning practices and development of OERs continue to expand and impact practice in K-12 classrooms, issues of ownership, quality, and relevancy must be addressed by education leaders. Skill sets for both teachers and students to support open learning, and the ability to interact with others in multiliterate shared learning spaces, are critical issues for continued research and review. Finally, educators and students need to be permitted the freedom to safely play and learn in these multiliterate spaces. Many of the complexities and challenges that exist when bringing the Internet into the classroom are exacerbated as learners read and write openly. Paradoxically it is this type of learning environment that may provide the most valuable, authentic learning context.

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Erratum

This Erratum is for the article "Cloud-Based Collaborative Writing and the Common Core" by Soobin Yim, Mark Warschauer, Binbin Zheng and Joshua F. Lawrence in the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 58(3).

On page 254, in the 'More to Explore' section the title of the book in the first reference appears incorrectly as:

Lawrence , J.L., Warschauer, M., Zheng, B., & Mullins, D. (2013). Research in digital literacy: Tools to support learning across the disciplines. In J. Ippolito, C. Zaller, & J.F. Lawrence (Eds.), What middle and secondary teachers need to know about adolescent literacy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.

The correct reference is:

Lawrence , J.L., Warschauer, M., Zheng, B., & Mullins, D. (2013). Research in digital literacy: Tools to support learning across the disciplines. In J. Ippolito, C. Zaller, & J.F. Lawrence (Eds.), **Adolescent literacy in the era of the common core: From research into practice.** Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.

Also, the following acknowledgements were inadvertently omitted from the article

Acknowledgments: Funding for this study was provided by two Google Research Awards.