

Managing and Sharing e-Learning Resources

How repositories can help

Briefing Paper

April 2008

The extensive and growing use of online resources and materials in learning and teaching presents new opportunities and benefits to institutions. Technology has made the sharing and re-use of resources easier, and institutions and their staff can exploit the benefits within their working practices. Alongside this, institutional policies and processes may need updating to take into account the corresponding changes in management approach and systems provision.

Management Strategy for Educational Resources in Further and Higher Education

Institutions reviewing the opportunities to gain from these developments should assess the benefits of managing and sharing online resources for teaching, learning and research, taking a fresh approach to copyright, finding incentives for staff to engage, and deciding what information systems are required to support the business processes involved.

Institutional repositories provide a managed online system where the institution's resources can be both stored and accessed. They can give staff private or group areas where they can share material with their immediate colleagues. But material can, when appropriate, be re-used more widely, indeed openly, as staff and the institution see fit. Help from central support staff in managing resources in the system means that they are easy to find and work with. Ownership can remain with the university or college yet management be shared with tutors.

An institutional repository can help in the effective management of resources for e-learning and should be set up to meet the needs of an institution's strategy for managing, sharing and re-using resources.

A good strategy would lead to:

- A clear strategic vision of the institution's attitude and approach to management of learning and teaching resources
- Explicit and workable policies on copyright and ownership

- Improved institutional facilities for staff to share e-resources
- Higher levels of quality in e-learning materials
- An enhanced reputation for the institution and its staff

Benefits of Sharing, Re-using and Giving Access

Evidence from JISC-funded projects suggests that teaching staff are already aware of the benefits of sharing materials in terms of saving time and trouble and improving quality. Lecturers readily share with their immediate colleagues and with collaborative subject groups often using 'personal' means (such as email, memory sticks, personal web pages, etc.) and more recently external Web 2.0 sharing systems (such as Flickr, Slideshare, YouTube, etc.). In many cases teaching staff use the institutional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) as a storage and sharing system as this is where they upload a substantial amount of their teaching materials. However VLEs are not really designed for this purpose. The recent development of the use of centrally managed institutional repository systems offers much greater potential.

Benefits of managing and sharing resources for an institution include:

- Saving time and cost by re-use
- Making better quality resources available to tutors
- Supporting collaborative course development both within institutions and across institutions
- Giving access to outputs of development projects
- Supporting the transfer of institutional research and enterprise knowledge for learning and teaching
- Coping with situations where staff leave and are replaced
- Developing good professional reputations for individuals and institutions within the further and higher education (FHE) sector

As well as teaching materials, repositories can be useful for a wide range of institutional resources and collections. Examples include undergraduate dissertations, showcases

Managing and Sharing e-Learning Resources

April 2008

of student work, past examination papers, digitised images used locally and collections of sound recordings from lectures or other activities. Educational material and its use differs from that in research repositories and will need a different approach. Within an institutional repository a university or college can decide its own way of working and set its own rules for usage and management.

Alongside benefits for individual institutions, there are additional benefits to the educational sector as a whole. Some institutions are more than happy to share their online learning resources openly across the sector; others host publicly-funded projects which develop teaching materials, and could as a matter of policy always publish such materials openly in a readily accessible manner. The national repository **Jorum** (www.jorum.ac.uk) offers a further opportunity for more widespread dissemination of educational material. Institutional repositories are part of the foundations for building a culture in which educational resources are openly and efficiently managed.

Making Copyright, Ownership and IPR Clear

Through the work of JISC-funded projects it has become apparent that many universities do not have clear policies on copyright and ownership of learning materials. In some cases, policies may exist but they are not publicised or adhered to. Clear policies on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), copyright and ownership would remove the considerable confusion which is acting as a barrier to gaining the benefits of sharing and re-use. Most institutions are in a position where they own the usage rights of materials produced by their employees yet teaching staff are allowed to act as if they themselves were the owners.

It is possible to create straightforward policies which support the process of sharing, yet protect the institution. For example, the university or college can retain its right to IPR and ownership of materials used in e-learning but grant a licence to staff to use such materials in any non-profit educational setting.

Such a framework would for example cope with what happens to electronic resources when a tutor leaves for another teaching employment and is replaced by someone new. Some tutors have themselves re-used material from other sources and are uncertain whether they are in fact permitted to do so. As copyright confusion is often cited as a barrier preventing staff using repositories, improving clarity in policy on ownership is a top priority.

Summary

Both managers and tutors in further and higher education institutions can work together to decide the best ways forward. Though there are many issues to take into account, there are three major aspects which need attention:

The strategic vision: publishing and implementing the agreed institutional policy and approach to sharing and re-using online resources, both locally and externally.

The legal framework: defining ownership, copyright and IPR in a way which protects the organisation's assets yet allows open sharing within the educational community.

The online systems: identifying the different kinds of systems for sharing and re-use both locally and externally; providing and developing the use of institutional systems and repositories which meet tutors' immediate practical needs, yet also exploit the benefits of managing, sharing and re-using resources.

Further Reading

Sharing eLearning Content – a synthesis and commentary by Andrew Charlesworth, Nicky Ferguson, Seb Schmöller, Neil Smith, Rob Tice.

<http://ie-repository.jisc.ac.uk/46>

A wide-ranging study of over 30 projects bringing out the key messages and proposals from them.

Managing Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in Digital Learning Materials: A Development Pack for Institutional Repositories by John Casey, Jackie Proven and David Dripps
<http://trustdr.ulster.ac.uk/outputs.php>

Aimed at those who are setting up or running digital collections of learning materials that are managed at institutional level.

The approach taken is based on the idea that the organisation of an IPR policy should reflect and support the educational activity rather than hinder it.

Structured Guidelines for Setting up Learning Object Repositories by Anoush Margaryan, Colin Milligan and Peter Douglas

<http://ie-repository.jisc.ac.uk/106>

For repository managers, librarians and all individuals who are responsible for planning, carrying out and managing the design, development and implementation of a learning object repository, but also of interest to middle and senior managers in institutions of higher and further education.

Repositories Support Project

www.rsp.ac.uk

Advice and support for users and managers of digital repositories.

This briefing paper was written by Andrew Rothery (University of Worcester) with contributions from Ian Butchart (University of Teeside), Lorna Campbell, Phil Barker (JISC CETIS), Steve Bailey (JISC infoNet) and Neil Jacobs (JISC).

Alternative formats of this briefing paper can be found at:
www.jisc.ac.uk/publications