



Is it Time to Change the OER Repositories Role?

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Motivating Factors

- The need for Open Educational Resources (OER) has a compelling logic.
- Even if we all embrace the idea of making teaching and learning content freely available, some institutions will have to pay for it.
- Therefore, such an investment should be justified by needs.
- Some relevant questions in this context are
 - How people find needed learning content?
 - What is the source of that content?
 - What proportion of users go directly to OER repositories and when?
 - What proportion use search engines and what some other means?

The goal of this work

- To study the role of OER repositories in comparison to other sources of open content.

OER repositories are underused

- The current OER repositories are based on research repositories.
- This model does not fit well in the routine practices of teachers
- Research and OER Repositories came into play with dissimilar purposes
 - Publicity
 - Structuring
 - Versions
 - Retention
 - Publication type
 - Audience

Some re-thinking of the repositories infrastructure is needed

- Search engines (SE) are a highly competitive alternative
- Users frequently arrive at repository items from SE
- There will always be some OER outside of the repository space.
- The Learning Resources Metadata Initiative (LRMI) was formed in response to the need of making learning resources discoverable.

The Study

The survey done through *surveymonkey.com* consisted of fifteen questions

(iiscs.wssu.edu/OERSurveys/OER_Survey_2/SurveySummary.html)

- 374 participants
 - 38.3% doctoral/research universities
 - 27.8% masters
 - 21.6% baccalaureate
 - 7.3% associate colleges
 - 5.1% other

 - 145 from North America
 - 101 from Europe
 - 54 from Asia, Australia and NZ
 - 40 from South/Central America and Caribbean
 - 32 from Africa

 - 79.6% with five or more years teaching experience
 - 20.4% with less than five years

Teachers' awareness of repositories hosting OER resources.

- 92.1% of respondents are aware of the existence of OER repositories.

How?

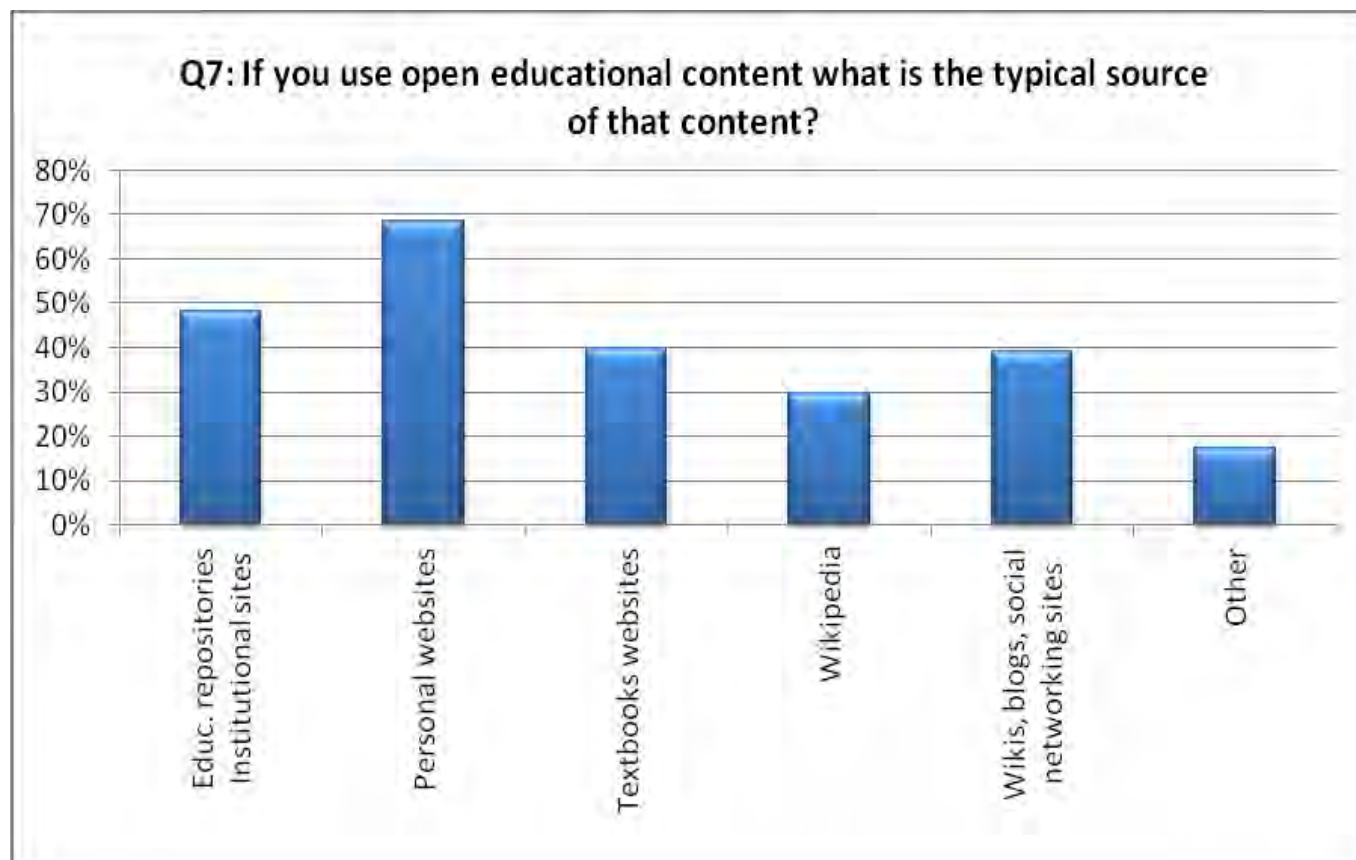
- 72.3% became aware of repositories through SE
- 45.2% through colleagues
- 36.5% from professional forums
- 20.6% from newsgroups

OER repositories utilization.

- 85.8% of respondents have used OER content in their teaching

If you use open educational content what is the typical source of that content?

- The question revealed that the most common source of such content are personal web sites (68.4%).
- The use of OER repositories is less common (48.3%).



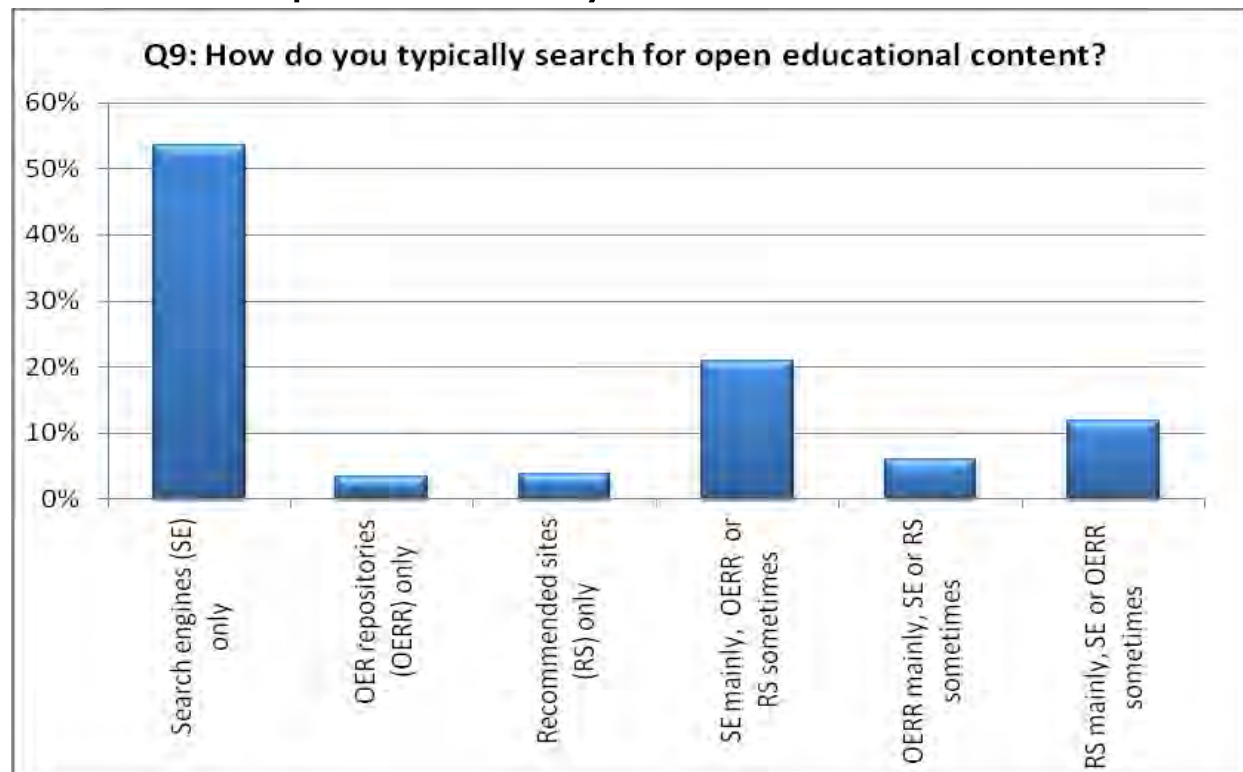
The typical level of granularity sought by respondents

- 57.1% seek part of a lecture or activity.
- 29.7% seek larger units (lecture notes, assignments, tests)
- 11.9% seek course level content.

This result demonstrates the need for a full text search

How do you typically search for open educational content?

- 53.5% use exclusively search engines (SE).
- 21% use mainly SE, sometimes repositories
- 12% go to familiar/recommended sites, sometimes use SE engines or OER repositories.
- 3.5% use OER repositories only



What makes SE a preferable tool for locating OER

- 78% - ability to search for any resource
- 60.3% - convenience, immediacy and ease of use
- 21.3% - ability to accomplish my search tasks successfully
- 21% - reliability and efficiency
- 10% - popularity and reputation

Using advanced search

48.5% do not use advanced search for learning resources.

28.6% use advanced search

23.1% use advanced search sometimes.

What makes repositories a preferable tool for locating OER

- 68.1% - quality control of the hosted material
- 54.3% - release under open content licenses
- 36.2% - ability to explore resources in my own way
- 27.7% - intuitive classification that supports organized browsing/exploration

Start time for searching needed OER

- 38.9% - days before their use
- 26.4% - weeks before the use
- 22.6% - hours before the use

How do you find needed online information relating to your professional development?

- 74% use search engines
- 23.8% use search engines and repositories
- 2% use only repositories

Comments (open question)

Summary

- The content organization and search mechanisms provided by current OER repositories are inadequate.
- Instructors depend increasingly on SE for locating relevant information including OER.
- The primary tool for finding OER is Google.

Samples (from 48)

- *I don't care if the material that I need for my class comes from a repository, personal or corporate site. What I care is to be able to find it quickly with my search engine.*
- *Open Content is only one part of the OER structure. The remaining parts are equally important. Making quality content appear in the Google top pages would be one of the greatest enablers for widespread use of Open Educational Resources.*

Discussion

- Finding OER content should be easy and convenient - as Google's search.
- The focus should be shifted on tools and standards that enable efficient finding of OER resources independently of their location and origin.
 - The bulk of the used OER comes from non-repository sites.
- Repositories should be opened up for full text search or properly annotated.
- Metadata vocabularies developed under initiatives such as *LRMI* based on the *schema.org* should be utilized.

Conclusion

- The results of this study suggest that there is a need for re-thinking the role of the OER repositories
 - To be used as components of a global network of resources with high visibility combined with archiving and preservation functionality
 - To support content organization conforming to the prevalent searching behavior of OER users
 - To delegate largely resource discovery to SEs
 - To make the content understood by SE and thus findable by using standard metadata (e.g. schema.org extensions).
- The power of OER is not in their production; it is in their reuse.