

## Progress Report

<b>Project Name</b>	<i>Sesame</i>
<b>Project Website</b>	<a href="http://www.tall.ox.ac.uk/research/current/sesame.php">http://www.tall.ox.ac.uk/research/current/sesame.php</a>
<b>Report compiled by</b>	<i>Marion Manton</i>
<b>Reporting period</b>	<i>October 2011 - March 2012</i>
<b>Section One: Summary</b>	
<p>In the first six months of the Sesame project we created a beta version of our discovery point, <a href="http://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/">http://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/</a>, and uploaded about 200 resources, ranging from podcasts and videos to reading lists, assignment questions and links to useful materials on other websites. While these resources are not currently licensed as OER (as we are still in the process of confirming our release process), all have been checked and cleared as suitable open content and will be licensed as soon as the release process is implemented.</p> <p>This headline achievement has been supported by a series of underlying activities. A baseline survey of our main stakeholder group, part-time tutors of the Department's Weekly Class programme, was undertaken to inform our communications and training plans. The project then promoted its work to the tutors at one of their annual staff development days and used this occasion to launch the successful initial pilot, which trained and supported 11 tutors during Hilary (Spring) term to produce the outputs above. We are currently evaluating this activity. We have just launched our second pilot for tutors teaching in Trinity (Summer) term. This will extend the work of the first pilot to a wider audience by delivering training workshops and providing the infrastructure to enable tutors to engage directly with the discovery point to upload and release their own materials.</p>	
<b>Section Two: Activities and Progress</b>	
<p><b>WORKPACKAGE 1: Project management and contributing to JISC programme</b> All activities in this workpackage, that were scheduled for this reporting period, have been completed.</p> <p><b>WORKPACKAGE 2: Project initiation</b> All activities in this workpackage have been completed.</p> <p><b>WORKPACKAGE 3: Initial pilots</b> All activities associated with running the initial pilots have been completed. However we have not initiated task 18, "Brief and work with ten part-time tutors to develop OER-based subject collections and generic material on preparing to study at FHEQ Level 4", as it was decided to delay developing the subject collections until we had run the initial pilot, and so could better define what was required. Due to the need to make resources available for the pilot courses at the start of Hilary term (which began on 09 January 2012), we checked the resources for their suitability for being openly licensed but did not release them with CC licenses. We have consulted widely and have almost finalised our CC licensing and release process. Once the process is signed off, the resources created during the pilots will be openly licensed and task 20, "Submit initial OER to relevant aggregators/repositories" can commence.</p> <p><b>WORKPACKAGE 4: Consolidate</b> Activities in this work package are not scheduled for this period.</p> <p><b>WORKPACKAGE 5: Stakeholder engagement and evaluation</b> Activities in this workpackage have been completed broadly on schedule, with the exception of running the initial focus group. We decided to delay the initial focus group meeting until we had the pilot Discovery point containing the OER resources from the initial pilot in place so that we could seek feedback on these. We expect to hold the focus group in May 2012.</p> <p>We also added the baseline tutor survey, mentioned above, to this workpackage.</p> <p><b>WORKPACKAGE 7: Embedding activities</b> Work on the tasks in this area was initially delayed to allow the project team to focus on the critical tasks associated with running the initial project pilot. We are now close to finalising our policies in respect of the release process and ensuring all documentation and tools to support our contributors are in place.</p> <p><b>WORKPACKAGE 8: Dissemination of project outputs</b> The initial project dissemination activities planned for this reporting period have been completed on schedule. In addition to the tasks originally planned, we also used Open Education Week (5-12 March 2012) as an opportunity to publicise the concept of open education to the students of the Department, while also drawing their attention to the project. The project was also mentioned when we presented at the SCORE event,</p>	

Learning from the OER research projects<sup>1</sup>. Moving forward we have submitted a proposal for a short paper to ALT-C, and have just agreed to participate in the Supporting Academic Practice in a Digital Age symposium at the University of Exeter<sup>2</sup> to run a workshop on how students use OER, building on the project experience thus far as well as our earlier research in this area.

Note an updated workpackages document has been sent with this report.

### **Section Three: Institutional & Project Partner Issues**

The project has seen no changes to the institutional context and there are no formal project partners. As mentioned in the original proposal, where appropriate, we are collaborating with the other Oxford OER project, Great Writers, and have been in regular contact on both technical and legal issues to ensure that the Sesame project infrastructure and OER licensing processes are compatible with wider-University OER platforms.

### **Section Four: Outputs and Deliverables**

The main output of the project thus far is the range of resources available through <http://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/>, which will be released as Creative Commons licensed OER in the near future. Outputs of the project will be released as OER through the portal, at: <http://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/series/sesame-project-outputs>, with our evaluation survey questions currently available. We have also created many training resources aimed at our stakeholders, but as these are evolving as we run successive training events, we will only release these as OER at the end of the project.

All blog posts are available at <http://tallblog.conted.ox.ac.uk/index.php/category/oersesame/>, and all tweets have been made using the project hashtag #oersesame as well as the strand hashtag #ukoer.

### **Section Five: Outcomes and Lessons Learned**

The project thus far has been a valuable learning process in highlighting the difference between creating OER and supporting open practices in theory, and implementing them in reality. Outcomes and lessons learned are emerging in the following areas:

#### **Understanding our major stakeholders and initial constraints**

As a way of establishing a baseline for the Sesame project, we canvassed the opinions of our part-time weekly class tutors on issues around teaching and learning, technology use, open resources and more<sup>3</sup>. In terms of engagement with OER, nearly 40% had heard of OER prior to our project which was higher than anticipated. This continued with nearly 30% having used OER in their teaching and learning and 7% already producing OER. This may be a function of a self selecting sample but still indicates a relatively high level of engagement.

Generally our tutors felt that OER were 'a good thing'. However they were clearly more comfortable simply putting content online rather than making it fully open, as just over half expressed concern about what happens when content is openly released. In terms of reasons to engage with OER, our tutors self-reported being far more interested in the altruistic reasons for engagement: "it is a good thing to do", "student learning will be improved" or "[it brings] benefits to the institution", rather than the potential personal gains, either financial or reputational. Interest in training was highest in the area of how to find good resources and how best to use them.

On a more pragmatic note, the survey confirmed our initial thoughts that one of our biggest challenges in terms of making content associated with our weekly class courses online and open is the fact that, with the exception of reading lists, those resources which tutors most often currently make available to students in hard copy are often those which cannot usually be openly licensed, such as photocopies of book chapters and journal articles, copies of photographs, diagrams, maps or illustrations and copies of primary sources. Thus much perfectly legitimate classroom practice thwarts the promise of seamless sharing and openness.

#### **Focus on early outputs**

<sup>1</sup> <http://cloudworks.ac.uk/cloudscape/view/2375>

<sup>2</sup>

[http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/educationenhancementprojects/current\\_projects/cascade.html/academicpracticeinadigitalageevent/](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/educationenhancementprojects/current_projects/cascade.html/academicpracticeinadigitalageevent/)

<sup>3</sup> See questions at <http://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/resources/documents/sesame-project-baseline-tutor-survey>

Getting resources online (even if not necessarily licensed) early has proved very valuable for the project, allowing us to show pilot tutors and wider stakeholders what the project is hoping to achieve in the longer term. As the online resources generated moved from theoretical idea to concrete reality, they helped make a case for the project. We managed this by offering full support to the part-time tutors participating in our initial pilot, which allowed the project team to tackle the teething troubles inherent in any new initiative, and find solutions to them, before they became a barrier for contributors. As a result, initial pilot contributors had a largely positive experience, with all but one committing to continue to produce OER. We would very much recommend the approach of running very well supported small initial pilot projects to others seeking to begin similar initiatives.

However getting resources online very early necessitated the rapid development of our Discovery point platform. This rapid development helped us to be much clearer about the technical requirements and has allowed us to move onto the next stage of development with a better specification, validated by use. While our early technical development was of significant benefit to the project team overall, it had resource implications (see section 10) and could have been better initially scoped with the developer (see comments on issues and challenges in Section 8).

### **Understanding the types of OER we are generating**

Our initial pilot generated over 200 resources. Initial lessons learned about openly licensing different kinds of resources is summarised below.

#### **Documents**

Presentations and handouts have created the most challenges in identifying what might be suitable for open licensing, as these resources are most likely to contain materials with dependant copyright issues. As a result, our outputs of these types are fewer than we had initially expected.

#### **Images**

Images have been far more prevalent than anticipated, with many tutors using original images in their teaching, that they are prepared to release as OER. Examples include photographs they have taken and hand-drawn illustrations.

#### **Video**

As expected, few tutors have the skills to engage in the creation of videos without considerable support, so we anticipate video outputs will be minimal. However, it is worth noting that the Department is likely to continue its existing practice of providing technician support for videoing high profile or potentially very popular activities, and intends to make these video resources available through <http://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/> and release them as OER where possible, whether generated through the work of the weekly classes programme or otherwise.

#### **Audio**

Self-created podcasts have been popular, with over half of the pilot tutors creating these. However, early indications suggest that podcasts created by direct recording face-to-face teaching were rarely of a quality that tutors were happy to release. This was largely due to lack of context – they were perceived as useful for students who missed the class, but not as something they would want to share more widely. Thus, those tutors who created podcasts about specific teaching points, rather than as a by-product of their face-to-face teaching, were more likely to produce something they were prepared to openly release.

#### **Links**

The project always intended to collate existing OER and other useful online resources for teaching and learning as part of its output, and roughly a third of the resources produced during the pilot are of this type. Our real challenge here has been finding useful and accurate information about the conditions of use of the linked-to materials, with many websites providing either ambiguous information or none at all. As a result, the project team has undertaken to check all links and only designate as open content those where we can be certain the material is openly licensed.

We have had initial contact from the OER evaluation team and our evaluation partner project, FAVOR, and our follow up phone call is due to take place on the 9<sup>th</sup> May. Please see the next section for further information on our project evaluation activities undertaken to date.

### **Section Six: Evaluation**

The evaluation plan is being implemented as outlined in the project plan. Formative evaluation is being carried out to monitor project progress, to ensure the quality of outputs and to gather evidence that the project is meeting its aims and objectives. Fortnightly updates are being circulated by the project manager to keep the project management group updated on progress and monthly project management meetings are being held to

ensure that project milestones are being met on schedule.

As outlined in section 2, we decided to postpone the focus group with stakeholders to explore the appropriateness of the planned resources, the proposed release interface and other release routes. This activity was originally planned for January 2012, but we felt we could gather more valuable feedback if we were able to give stakeholders the opportunity to see example of the resources the project plans to release and explore the Discovery point for themselves. We expect to hold a focus group in mid May 2012. This timing will allow feedback and suggestions for improvement received from stakeholders to be incorporated in the specification for the final version of our Discovery point and in training provided for our third round of pilots.

A deviation from our original evaluation plan was the inclusion of a baseline survey of our main stakeholder group, current part-time tutors of the Department's Weekly Class programme. An online survey was developed and circulated to the stakeholder group in December 2011 and 62 responses were received (approximately 30% of individuals surveyed) from tutors in 23 subject disciplines. As outlined in section 5 above, data gleaned from this survey was used to inform the design of the pilots, and the communication and training plans. Data collected about attitudes to open content, prior knowledge and experience of OER, areas in which tutors wished to develop their knowledge and skills, and current use of supporting resources in teaching proved particularly useful.

As we complete the first pilot, we are using the experiential data gained from running this to inform the design of the second pilot. We also produced two evaluation questionnaires, one for the tutors<sup>4</sup> who participated in the first pilot and one for students<sup>5</sup> who studied the 11 courses included in the first pilot. These questionnaires collected evaluation data in a number of areas including tools and processes, guidance and supporting materials, training, and user acceptance. We are in the process of analysing this data but there are some promising findings, for example 85% of tutors who have completed the survey so far indicated that, based on their experience of the pilot, they plan to continue to create and release OER in the future.

## Section Seven: Dissemination

There has been much dissemination activity in the reporting period. In particular we have created the project website<sup>6</sup>, presented the project at the Weekly Class Programme Course Committee meeting and December 2011 staff development event. We have also publicised the project in Departmental publications (both the staff update and student directed newsletter); and given updates on the project in termly reports to Academic Board and OxTALENT (the University wide interest group for teaching and learning with new technology).

Beyond Oxford, as previously mentioned, we have submitted a proposal for a short paper to ALT-C, agreed to present at the Supporting Academic Practice in a Digital Age symposium at the University of Exeter, presented at the SCORE event, Learning from the OER research projects, and have also publicised open education and the project for Open Education Week, on the Department website at:

<http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/news/index.php?post=2012-03-05:101112:616> and through the Department's Facebook page.

More specifically we have publicised the project in communication with tutors and students as part of recruiting participants and running our two pilots; and have communicated with the podcasts.ox.ac.uk team and the Great Writers project as required.

We have been reporting on the work of the project on the TALL blog - see

<http://tallblog.conted.ox.ac.uk/index.php/category/oersesame/> and we have been tweeting about the project using #oersesame and #ukoer.

Most of the dissemination activities outlined above have been relatively internally focussed, or not directed specifically to the promotion of our resources (as deliberate policy to not over promote our outputs to the wider world while the majority are not yet openly licensed). Despite this we were gratified to discover that from mid January to early April <http://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/> received over 800 unique visitors and just under 10,000 page views.

<sup>4</sup> See tutor survey at <http://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/resources/documents/sesame-project-first-pilot-tutor-survey>

<sup>5</sup> See student survey at <http://open.conted.ox.ac.uk/resources/documents/sesame-project-first-pilot-student-survey>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.tall.ox.ac.uk/research/current/sesame.php>

## Section Eight: Issues and Challenges

Overall the project has progressed broadly as expected. Where there have been delays, these have largely been due to our taking a more measured approach than originally planned, to ensure key activities were done correctly first time rather than rushed through. A major example of this has been our approach to licensing the content produced by the project. Our challenge here has been to make licensing content as easy as possible for the end user in order to encourage participation, whilst at the same time not over simplifying and possibly misinforming contributors. Following consultation with the JISC Legal Service and colleagues involved in well established OER projects within the University, we have adopted an approach, which we hope is both user friendly and ensures that we have informed consent from participants. The process has involved evaluating how best to work with the University's existing consent form<sup>7</sup>, which was widely perceived to be off-putting, and to see if we might replace paper processes with ones embedded in our Discovery point.

Another challenge is making the case for participation to busy part-time tutors, who have to engage with identifying and creating OER resources on top of their existing teaching work, for no extra remuneration. Thus, as we move from early pilots with enthusiasts and early adopters, to more widely targeted pilots, we have already experienced a significant decline in interest. This was anticipated from the start and the weekly class tutor cohort is large enough that we will have significant contributors, even with only partial engagement; however, we would like to ensure we can work with as many of our potential target group as possible. We have made use of outputs from previous projects, such as arguments for the benefits of OER creation, and, while these are attractive to many, this does not always compel tutors to personally make the jump from thinking OER are 'a good thing for others to do', to releasing content themselves. We have also had several tutors who want to create or use resources in ways that are not possible - because we are taking an open approach to putting materials online - such as giving access to articles or photocopied chapters, which would have been possible under institutional site licences, in a password protected VLE.

A practical issue thus far has been getting good titles, descriptions and keywords for resources from tutors. We are hopeful this will improve in the next pilot following training on the importance of this information and also as tutors will have the opportunity to input this data themselves. However we suspect this will remain a challenge.

With the initial pilot giving us a good picture of the sort of outputs we can expect, we are starting to consider the issues around managing this legacy into the future. While we have clearly delineated the processes for continuing to produce OER we have not properly explored the issues around managing, updating and on-going quality control more generally. As a result this is something we want to consider in both process and technical terms in the next stage platform specification.

While in many ways our technical development has been extremely successful, with a usable platform with many features functioning within a couple of months of the start of the project, this was not ideal for our developer, who worked more hours on the project than initially budgeted for (see section 10), so we are working closely with him to ensure the next stage of development is planned with greater consultation. As a rule, there have been more technical issues to do with developing in Drupal 7 than anticipated, and managing expectations of what can be done in technical terms has been a challenge for our developer. Despite these issues, the early development of a usable platform has had many benefits (see section 5) and has allowed us to better understand both Drupal itself and user requirements of it, so we can better define future development goals from both perspectives.

In addition, technical work has also been complicated by the rapid changes taking place in some of the areas in which this project engages, in particular the requirements of video and audio resources to be handled differently from most other file types due to their relatively large size, the various techniques we must choose from for usable and efficient delivery, and the complexity of supporting multiple platforms. This was not something we had originally factored into the project, because of this, we hope to continue to add more resource towards work in this area (see section 10 below). We plan to use a media server already set up in the department, to do this we will need to develop an interface to manage the files between the open.conted.ox.ac.uk server and the media server, to deliver the resources effectively.

## Section Nine: Collaboration and Support

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ox.ac.uk/document.rm?id=2026>

Our most recent research into others' outputs has been into examples of individuals licensing their own outputs, terms and conditions of use of websites containing OER material and marking OER with licensing details. If there are any particular examples of these which could be recommended, these would be appreciated. We are also continuing our existing communication on areas of overlap with the Great Writers project and are looking forward to collaborating with our evaluation partners soon.

We have benefitted greatly from the support offered by JISC, in particular the individual support from the JISC Legal IPR team, who we had a detailed Skype call with on 10 January 2012. The meeting clarified several key issues for us and Deborah Ferns and Jackie Milne were very helpful following-up afterwards answering specific questions and providing feedback on some draft documents. We've also received advice from JISC Cetus, who have shared much useful information. We have also found that the information in the OER infoKit and that posted by the OER evaluation and synthesis project has been extremely valuable. At this current time there are no areas in which we feel we need additional support; however, we are confident about who to approach should any technical, legal or project management issue arise.