



LEARNING TO TEACH ONLINE

Integrating online resources into your teaching

Aims and overview

This episode identifies different types of online resources including scholarly material available online through libraries, and highlights copyright considerations for using existing material from the Internet in your teaching. It also discusses the benefits of Open Educational Resources (OER), where teachers can freely access and contribute to a wide range of learning and teaching resources from institutions around the world.

Written by Simon McIntyre



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“...you have to free yourself of the idea that your job is to write copious notes and incredibly detailed lectures as if you’re the only person who has something to contribute.” (Professor Matthew Allen)

“There’s so much good content out there now, that academics should feel a lot more confident is using those materials...” (Dr Richard Mobbs)

“...public ownership or public utility of information is becoming more and more widespread, and as we get more images, more video and more sound, it becomes a very rich base from which students and teachers can incorporate some sort of media forms into the work they are doing.” (Dr Tama Leaver)

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Why use online resources?

The term online resources refers to a wide range of information available on the Internet including text, images, videos, case studies, journals, databases, and curriculum to name a few. Online resources can be held in scholarly databases or libraries; be made by teachers specifically for their classes; or be found on the open web. There are many different digital formats for online resources including web sites, audio and video [podcasts](#), PDF files, [ebooks](#), interactive learning objects, digital tools for creating resources etc.

So many resources are now being freely shared online that it can be advantageous for teachers and students to develop an understanding of appropriate and legal use. Care must be also taken to assess the validity and copyright implications of using resources found online. Students should also be supported in developing appropriate information literacy skills to help them make informed decisions about what constitutes an appropriate resource for learning.

There are many benefits that using online resources can bring to teaching and learning, including:

- **Access to information from many different voices and experts:** *There are many resources from credible institutions, public commentators, organisations and news media available online. Using these resources in class gives students an opportunity to access expert commentary on topics, and to contextualise their learning through analysis of different sources of information*
- **Save time:** *As a teacher, you don't have to reinvent the wheel, or do everything yourself. You can bring the knowledge of others into your class and concentrate on facilitating active learning strategies such as discussions and analysis of the material*
- **Share your expertise with others:** *If you have created an online resource for a certain topic, you may wish to share this openly with others by making it available online under a [Creative Commons](#) licence*
- **Students can take an active role in finding and sharing course resources:** *Integrating tasks into your curriculum where students find and assess online resources on a particular topic can be a good way to engage them in the class content*
- **Resources are always available:** *If resources for your class are online, students can always access them at any time that they are needed*
- **Equity and accessibility:** *Having resources online offers equity and accessibility to information for all students on and off-campus.*

Resources available through your library

Probably one of the first places to look for scholarly resources should be your institution's library. The open web, and search engines such as Google cannot always reach resources held within subscription-only databases, whereas most university libraries have extensive online access to these types of databases. Some resources available through your library may include:

- *Subscription-only databases, including those containing texts, images, music and news broadcasts*
- *Electronic journals, book chapters and conference proceedings*
- *Electronic books and exam papers.*

Open educational resources (OER)

There is a wealth of credible learning resources for all stages of learning, that have been made available to the world for free under the concept of [Open Educational Resources](#) (OER). These resources are usually released under [Creative Commons](#) licences by different educational institutions or individual academics for use by anyone, providing they comply with the conditions of the licence (*refer to the episode '[Understanding Creative Commons - Case Study](#)' for more information*).

OER covers many different subject areas, and include a wide variety of learning materials such as curricula, lectures, interactive learning objects, professional development materials, podcasts, etc (the Learning to Teach Online project is in itself an example of a professional development OER).

There are several online OER repositories that enable teachers to contribute to, and access material from the larger academic community, such as [Merlot](#), [MIT Open Courseware](#), [Jorum](#) and [iTunes U](#). These repositories make it easy to search for resources across a variety of criteria such as topic, type of media, etc. Some repositories contain peer review systems to help establish the authenticity and reputation of the resources. Further examples of OER repositories are given in the [additional information](#) section at the conclusion of this document.

The advantages of OER include:

- **Access to a range of digital formats:** *You may not have the skills required to make the same type of resources available through OER. Using a variety of digital formats such as text, video, images and audio can be an exciting way to engage students in the course content*
- **Currency of information:** *There are always new resources being published or uploaded into the aforementioned repositories on a wide range of topics*
- **Use resources from some of the most reputable institutions in the world:** *You have the opportunity to use resources from institutions with reputations for quality learning and teaching, and to use material created by world renowned experts in different fields. MIT, Harvard and Cambridge along with many other institutions, provide resources for open use which can be found on iTunes U or other OER repositories*
- **Many points of view:** *You have the chance to enrich student learning by hearing from a range of different sources, creating greater opportunities for comparative analysis, discussion and debate*
- **Save time and money:** *Institutions are free to use OER for teaching as long as this complies with the Creative Commons licence it is offered under. There are no access or development costs, and materials are usually ready for immediate use.*

Copyright considerations⁽¹⁾

Under Australian copyright law, *all* material, creative works or resources are automatically granted copyright protection without the need for registration, whether copyright is explicitly stated on the work or not. With this in mind, it is of vital importance that teachers understand how to use online resources legally.

[Creative Commons](#) allows the sharing and remixing of work in accordance with the various licences, as with Open Educational Resources. However, resources or information that is not offered under Creative Commons licences are subject to copyright law. Copyright is more restrictive in that it protects the [moral rights](#) of the

creator of the work, prohibiting (in most cases) copying or reusing the work without express permission. There are however, often less stringent policies in place for educational use of copyrighted material (check with your own institution's copyright office). You should consider the following points before using any online resources in your teaching:

- **Check your own university's copyright policy:** *Before using any online material as resources, to understand their approach to managing copyright*
- **Check the resources terms of use or conditions:** *Many websites include a 'terms of use section', that state which copyright or creative commons laws apply, and if the material can legally be reused*
- **Teachers may be personally responsible for complying with copyright law:** *Infringing copyright can result in teachers being held personally responsible. Check your institution's copyright policy*
- **Provide links to online resources:** *If you are unsure of the copyright status of an online resource, it would be prudent to provide a link in your class to the original resource, rather than embedding, downloading or reusing the material (please note the next important point)*
- **Do not use resources that infringe copyright:** *Make sure that any resources you use or provide links to do not contain material that already infringes copyright law. If you use these resources you are breaking copyright law yourself. If in doubt it is better to not use the resource.*

Conclusion

If you wish to begin to create online resources yourself for your classes, we strongly recommend starting simple. For example, making lecture notes, syllabus, timetables and administrative information available online can help students enormously, and creating resources that document or demonstrate technical processes can save much time in the classroom. When you are ready to integrate a wider range of online resources, we recommend visiting one of the many OER repositories, such as those listed in the Additional information section below.

Additional information

Creative Commons website

www.creativecommons.org

Search for Creative Commons content you can use in your teaching

<http://search.creativecommons.org>

Examples of Open Educational Resources (OER) from Creative Commons

www.creativecommons.org/education

Australian Copyright Council

www.copyright.org.au

MERLOT (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching OER)

www.merlot.org

MIT Open Courseware (OER, curriculum, lesson plans and other resources)

www.ocw.mit.edu

iTunes U (open resources from many universities worldwide)

<http://deimos3.apple.com/indigo/main/main.xml>

University of Leicester's OER Repository

www2.le.ac.uk/projects/oer

Jorum (Learning to Share)

www.jorum.ac.uk

The Open Courseware Consortium

www.ocwconsortium.org

Everystockphoto (A search engine for free or creative commons licenced photos. Use the advanced search)

www.everystockphoto.com

The Freesound Project (creative commons licenced music and sound clips)

www.freesound.org

[Tama Leaver's](#) sources of reusable media

<http://tamaleaver.pbworks.com/w/page/19139799/Sources-of-Legally-Reusable-Media>

Additional reading*

Atkins, D. E., Brown, J. S., & Hammond, A. L. (2007). [A Review of the Open Educational Resources \(OER\) Movement: Achievements, Challenges, and New Opportunities](#). San Francisco: The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Brown, J. S., & Adler, R., P. (2008). [Minds on Fire: Open Education, the Long Tail, and Learning 2.0](#). Educause Review, 43(1).

Friesen, N. (2009). [Open Educational Resources: New Possibilities for Change and Sustainability](#). The International Review Of Research In Open And Distance Learning, 10(5), Article 10.5.6.

Gerdson, T. (2003). Copyright: A User's Guide Available from <http://search.informit.com.au/browsePublication;isbn=086459240X;res=E-LIBRARY>

**Note: Some readings are held in subscription only databases. In most cases accessing the link from your institution's network will enable access*

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(1)The information about copyright provided in this episode is presented as a starting point for further investigation, and does not constitute legal advice. Copyright law can vary in different countries and you should always consult your institution's copyright web site, as well as our own country's copyright laws.

Any comments made by Susan Lafferty in relation to copyright in this episode are relevant to Australian law only. They are opinion only and should not be considered legally binding.

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Professor Matthew Allen

Head, Department of Internet Studies

Dr Tama Leaver

Lecturer, Department of Internet Studies



Professor Peter Goodyear

Professor of Education, Co-director, CoCo Research Centre



Dr Richard Mobbs

Head, Academic Liaison, IT Services



Chris Mitchell

Learning and Teaching Coordinator

For more Learning to Teach Online, visit the COFA Online Gateway



To find out more about the Learning to Teach Online project, or to view the video component of this episode, please visit the COFA Online Gateway.

www.online.cofa.unsw.edu.au

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Simon McIntyre
LTTO Project Leader
s.mcintyre@unsw.edu.au
Phone +61 2 8936 0631

Karin Watson
Co-Project Manager
karin@unsw.edu.au
Phone +61 2 8936 0631

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About the project

The [Learning to Teach Online](#) project is a free professional development resource designed to help teachers from any discipline, whether experienced in online teaching or not, to gain a working understanding of successful online teaching pedagogies that they can apply in their own unique teaching situations. It hopes to encourage dialogue, discussion and the sharing of ideas about online learning and teaching across disciplines and between institutions around the world.

About COFA Online

COFA Online is an academic unit at the College of Fine Arts (COFA), The University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney, Australia. It has been innovating online pedagogy, academic professional development and effective online learning strategies since 2003.

About The University of New South Wales

UNSW has an enrolment of approximately 40,000 students, and is the leading international university in Australia with over 10,000 international enrolments from over 130 nations. UNSW was also ranked as the top university in 2009 in the Australian Government Learning and Teaching Performance Fund for the quality of its teaching.



Australian Learning and Teaching Council

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