

open education

Introduction to Open Education Resources

The Term Open Educational Resources (OER) was coined at UNESCO's 2002 Forum on Open Courseware and designates "teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.

Why Open Education is good for Australian schools, teachers and students

The current collective copyright licence schemes and free use exceptions in relation to educational uses by teachers and schools are expensive, restrictive and complicated. Educator's valuable time is spent trying to understand complex copyright rules and seeking permission to use education resources.

Australian schools pay over \$665 million on education resources and over \$90 million approximately on copyright fees. These resources cannot be modified, shared or remixed except in very limited circumstances.

However Open Education can provide the following benefits:

- **Safer:** It is much safer for teachers to use Open Education Resources (OER) as they are free to reuse, remix, redistribute and adapt education resources without running the risk of breaching the complex copyright exceptions and copyright licence rules.
- **Internet compatible:** It is better adapted to the Internet and the freedom which the Internet provides to copy, distribute, adapt and remix resources.
- **Enabler:** Resources which are free to access are not necessarily free to reuse, remix or adapt. There are many online sources of information which can be freely accessed but often the right to adapt or remix is reserved to the copyright owner. Embedding third party content in education resources also prevents that content from being shared and copied without permission of the copyright owner. OER enables educators to reuse, remix and adapt resources since the copyright owner has already given permission to everyone.
- **Accessible:** It is easy to access openly licensed materials with over 800 million CC-licensed works as of 2014 and many searchable online databases of CC-licensed work available.
- **Collaborative:** It encourages collaboration between educators and creates communities based on sharing of education resources which can increase the quality of materials and the development of ideas.
- **Cheaper:** It helps to save money on copyright fees and administrative costs of seeking permission and allows education resources to be shared freely online with very low transaction costs.
- **Equitable:** It offers equal access to knowledge for everyone and allows for education resources to be adapted for minorities and those with disabilities.

What are Open Education Resources (OER)?

OER are teaching and learning materials that are freely available for everyone to use whether you are a teacher, student or self-learner. Learning and teaching materials which are made available openly under licences which permit their free access, use, adaptation and sharing by others are transformed into OER. Most OER resources use Creative Commons (CC) licences because they are well known licences that are free and easy to use and in particular the CC-BY (Attribution) and CC-BY-SA (Share Alike) licences are used. Further information about Creative Commons can be found at <http://www.smartcopying.edu.au/open-education/creative-commons>.

OER are not restricted to one format and can include hard copy and digital text, audio, video, images, interactive multimedia and combinations of these. OER can cover all levels of a learning plan from a single learning object to an entire course. They include worksheets, curriculum materials, lectures, homework assignments, quizzes, class activities, pedagogical materials, games and many more resources from around the world.

OER's fundamental values are that they are free for anyone to use and can be freely distributed, adapted, translated, remixed and improved.

OER meet the '5Rs Framework,' meaning that users are free to:

Retain: Users have the right to make, archive, and "own" copies of the content;

Reuse: Content can be reused in its unaltered form;

Revise: Content can be adapted, adjusted, modified or altered;

Remix: The original or revised content can be combined with other content to create something new; and

Redistribute: Copies of the content can be shared with others in its original, revised or remixed form.

OER in Australia

There is growing use and creation of OER in Australia. Recently the Australian Departments of Education agreed to licence their websites and publications under CC BY 4.0 where possible. Tasmania, South Australia and Qld Departments of Education have licenced their websites under CC BY 4.0 and the other states/territories are in the process of implementation. Many of the Departments of Education and non-government school sector are beginning to license their learning resources under Creative Commons licenses to ensure wider sharing and building of knowledge.

Other OER initiatives include Education Services Australia licensing more than 1600 digital learning resources from the national digital resources collection under CC licences (with hopefully many more to come). These CC licenced resources are available from Scootle (<http://www.scootle.edu.au/ec/p/creativeCommons>). The Australian Curriculum (www.australiancurriculum.edu.au) is also licensed under a CC BY NC SA licence in order to ensure that the curriculum is widely accessible to teachers and schools and to facilitate the development of teaching and learning resources. NCU expects to see more and more publicly funded educational resources licenced under Creative Commons licences.

The Smartcopying website has been produced by the National Copyright Unit on behalf of the Copyright Advisory Groups (Schools and TAFEs).

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