

The use of UGC in DET: issues and challenges for CLI

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Introduction: the democratisation of knowledge

In 2007 an OECD Working Party on the Information Economy issued a paper on what they termed User-Created Content, but which we generally refer to as User Generated Content. This paper lists the defining features of such content as

- made publicly available over the internet
- reflects a certain amount of creative effort
- created outside of the professional routines and practices

Wikipedia adds, more usefully, that such content is produced by end-users. Wikipedia itself is of course a prime example of user generated content, and demonstrates that the final arbiter of quality is the end user.

Wikipedia, Youtube, Facebook, Flickr, Myspace, etc. are all examples of the growth of the internet into a two-way super highway, often referred to as simply Web 2, and offer unlimited opportunities for creative collaboration, interactivity and socio-experiential learning.

It's all about the democratisation of knowledge, or, as some would have it, its liberation from the shackles of top-down authoritarianism. The pathway to an answer to the questions 'how do you know?' and 'how do you learn?' are no longer as straightforward as simply referring to an 'expert'. These days we can all be experts.

Do we like the democratisation of knowledge, or don't we? It doesn't matter. It's happening and can't be stopped. The question is how we become part of it.

CLI initiatives in the use of UGC

CLI's strong focus on innovation has resulted in several initiatives that involve UGC

Kim

Barry

TAA (Teachers Talking Through Technology)

The aim of this current project, managed by Bronwyn Thompson, is to post online learning materials for several electives in the TAA Cert IV connected to a technology pack that provides opportunities for teachers and trainers to familiarise themselves with Web2 technologies such as blogs, wikis, moodle, twitter, rss, etc. Completion of associated learning activities can be used as evidence for the elements of competency in the selected units.

Bikipedia

LRR

LAM initiatives

The purpose of this discussion paper is to outline some of the issues raised by UGC as they relate to TAFE NSW. This entails

- a description of the various types and characteristics of UGC
- an outline of how UGC is developed
- a summary of the skills required to develop UGC
- the presentation of some exemplars of UGC in an educational context
- an examination of the key affordances and constraints of UGC
- a forecast of the issues and implications for CLI if we were to develop and deploy UGC in TAFE NSW

Types and Characteristics

User Generated Content takes all shapes and forms. There are sites devoted to sharing

- writing (Google docs, Fanfiction, Quizilla)
- images (Picasa, Flickr)
- video (Youtube, Google video)
- journalism (Globalvoices, NowPublic)
- music (myspace)

Other types of UGC include virtual worlds like Second Life, public personal diaries like Facebook, international market places like ebay, and gaming sites that I don't pretend to understand. The landscape is vast and almost anything seems possible. All of this lies far beyond the scope of this paper, but the fact that everybody is or will be doing it provides a background against which the following discussion should be understood.

It might be more useful for us to focus for a moment on the platforms that make all this UGC possible.

- Blogs are web pages that contain user created entries that are updated at regular intervals, rather like an old-fashioned diary. Blogs may invite responses but each blog is controlled by the person who created it.
- Wikis allow a number of users to add, remove or edit content collectively. A wiki may be open to the whole world (eg. Wikipedia) or it may be restricted to a closed workgroup.
- Feedback sites such as FanFiction allow readers to upload their own materials and respond to other materials that they read on the site. Amazon has a function which encourages purchasers of books and other goods to submit reviews and evaluations.
- Bookmarking sites such as del.icio.us allow users to upload links to other sites and provide ratings for them.
- Podcasts are multimedia files distributed over the internet for playback on computers or mobile devices.

The question is how we can best harness these developments for educational use, although harness may not be the appropriate word, considering the degree of control that it implies.

Affordances

Micro-affordances

Educational use of UGC may include

- discussion forum
- teacher-created resources
- product reviews
- group projects
- posting notes and syllabi
- creation of on-line resources
- podcasts that improve quality and reach of education
- etc.

These affect our pedagogy in terms of how we do things, particularly in the areas of communication and resource development and use.

Macro-affordances

The micro-affordances represent some very visible and exciting developments in pedagogical approaches. However, they are but the tip of the iceberg. Consider the following:

First: Web2's amazing fit with constructivist learning. Web2 encourages collaboration, including the sharing and peer production of content, ideas, opinions and knowledge. It has the capacity to transform teaching from dissemination to facilitation. It enables teachers and students to set out on learning journeys together in ways that seem limited only by the facilitator's imagination.

The mere use of UGC will not make this happen. Is knowledge being created through peer production of content, or are we using the new technologies to perpetuate the time-honoured top-down pedagogy? Teachers post their notes on wikis and blogs instead of giving hand-outs in face to face classrooms. Students submit their assignments online and send emails to their teachers. These are efficiencies, but are our epistemological assumptions and pedagogical methodologies really changing? Are they even being challenged? Do the answers to these questions differ on either side of the digital divide? Perhaps, but consider these common complaints about online discussion boards

- the substance of discussions is poor
- participants post quickly rather than thoughtfully

- participation is uneven (most people lurk, and a few posters dominate the rest)
- discussion forums are segregated into balkanized communities of people with similar thoughts and beliefs

The new technologies facilitate constructivist education but are clearly not a synonym for it.

The following macro-affordances sit largely outside the firewall. That is, they are premised on free and open access to materials for use and adaptation.

Second: The new technologies give us the opportunity to burst the bounds of vocational education and training by establishing open partnerships with industry at every level. At present, industry informs our agenda, particularly in relation to content, but in rather a top-down way. Industry sets standards; we create conforming content so that students can attain those standards. Industry's input is initial, and then limited to comment on, and requests for revision of, the content that resource developers create.

With UGC technologies industry will be able to engage with the resources at the micro level. They may add, remove, and revise material as and how they please without any reference to the original creators of the material. More than this, they can participate more fully in the development of the materials in the first place.

This means that resources can be more immediately responsive to changes in industry standards, as well as to student needs. Industry, educators and students will have the capacity to collaborate and work in meaningful partnership to find appropriate solutions for rapidly evolving challenges in vocational education and training.

Third: UGC, coupled with free access to educational resources, has the capacity to allow greater cross-fertilization between disciplines. Industries need not remain in their current silo-like structures when it comes to education and training. If building students need maths skills their needs can be met without the creation of new materials which duplicate what has been done elsewhere. Learning materials on running small businesses can be adapted and used by everybody from apiarists to zoologists.

Fourth: The capacity for reducing duplication is enormous. Our eternal obsession with 'not re-inventing the wheel' could go some way to being satisfied. If resource developers have free access to materials that can be easily adapted for local or even individual use, what need do they have to begin from scratch? Clearly, the more material that is freely available, the less need others will have to recreate it. The dream of the Cape Town Open Education Declaration is to move closer to a world of open, flexible and effective education for all. The tools required to achieve this goal are now available.

Issues

Accessibility

Many of the public UGC sites are understandably not accessible on DET computers. Public UGC sites enable anybody in the whole world to add content, provided only that they have the technical equipment and skills to do so, and in most cases this simply means broadband internet access.

The issue for DET is to develop UGC platforms that allow access to a nominated group of users and deny access to all others. Many of the public platforms are proprietary, and the intellectual property involved is rigorously defined and doubtless vigorously defended. Licensing or independent development seem to be the only options. The expense of these options needs to be measured against the affordances they create.

Inappropriate content

This is a huge issue for public UGC sites. Most public UGC sites have a Terms of Service statement to which users must indicate their agreement in some way. These documents loosely define what they consider to be inappropriate content, which can include

- sexually explicit material
- violence
- terrorist propaganda
- advertising and promotional material
- impersonations
- inaccurate material
- abuse of intellectual property

Controlled access to UGC on DET sites will limit, but not eliminate these threats to the integrity of the materials. Public UGC sites are littered with disclaimers, warnings and sanctions. The issue is whether such strategies are sufficient for DET, or whether more tightly controlled preventative measures such as monitoring are required.

Monitoring

Monitoring raises a whole raft of further issues .

- who does it?
- who pays for it?
- how it is built into the process?
- what effect it will have on the use and effectiveness of UGC?

Is UGC a scary opening of the flood-gates, or an overdue 'letting go' of a paternalistic training and education model?

Poaching

The materials created by CLI and other parts of DET are currently protected from use by RTOs and others by the firewall. They are simply not accessible to people and organizations outside the portal. This ensures the integrity of the materials and the preservation of our unique brand in the market place.

Licensing of our materials to other RTOs has the potential to earn income, while insisting on attribution promotes our brand, and hence our capacity to attract funds from government and commercial partnerships.

Questions

1. Do we actually make any substantial amounts of money from licensing for online use?
2. Is there evidence to suggest that poaching does occur or would increase without firewall protection?
3. What effect would loss of branding have for CLI and for DET?

Intellectual Property Rights

Some of the issues related to Intellectual Property Rights are

Copyright in the platform

Most UGC platforms use copyrighted software which are not freely available for commercial use. (check this with Dheeraj). This means that we cannot take them and use them behind our firewall. Using the available sites such as delicious, eduwiki, facebook, etc. requires adherence to the conditions set by those sites.

There are some open source versions that can be used, eg. whatever was used to make CURLS . However, creation of alternatives inside the firewall has limited value as many potential contributors are necessarily excluded. It would seem preferable that the mainstream sites should be utilised wherever possible.

Copyright of material contributed as UGC (Wikipedia)

The conditions set by UGC sites usually stipulate that contributions are made under GNU or Creative Commons licences. This means that the contributor gives specific permission for anybody to use the contribution in any way, including commercially.

With GNU the only proviso on the use of material is that the terms of the licence must be reproduced with the material. A new simpler version of this licence is being developed.

This section needs considerable beefing up

See Michael Chessel

Richard DM

Third party IPR of material included in UGC, acknowledged or unacknowledged

If we publish sites that encourage people inside and/or outside TAFE/DET to make contributions, the problem of people contributing product that is not theirs to contribute raises its head. If person x inserts a graphic that he/she finds on another website, permission for its use should be sought and the intellectual property in that graphic ought to be acknowledged. Can we remain free of liability when this occurs on a site that we host? This will be true whether the site is inside or outside the firewall, although obviously the potential for significant abuse of third party intellectual property would be much greater outside the firewall.

It is probably worth noting that inadvertency is not a defence in legal terms. The onus is on the publisher/contributor to ensure that no third party intellectual property is disseminated without prior permission.

In this environment, publishers of UGC sites protect themselves by requesting assertions from contributors to the effect that the material they are contributing is their own work and that they have the legal right to publish it.

CAL

??? See MC??

Moral Rights

Materials that we commission and pay for are obviously ours to use as we will, provided only that the moral rights of the author/content developer to attribution are respected. This becomes a very grey area when we begin to adapt and change these materials, and even greyer when we invite others, perhaps including the whole world, to adapt and reuse them as they will. Some content developers may continue to insist on their moral right of attribution. Others may not wish to have their name associated with a product over whose permutations and incarnations they have no control.

The LRR can be viewed as the vocational education version of a remix or mash-up, and is consequently subject to the same issues as those facing the music and multimedia industries.

Fair Use

Small amounts of third party intellectual property may be legally used without permission of the original rights holder. In Australian law this is known as fair use, and is strictly defined.

Fair use: Three step test:

1. Confined to special case
 - a. Review or criticism
 - b. Parody or satire
 - c. Research or study
 - d. News reporting
2. Not in conflict with normal exploitation of the work
3. Of no unreasonable prejudice to the legitimate interests of the author

Clearly, the use of UGC will rarely be able to rely on a defence of fair use for the unauthorized use of third party intellectual property.

Remixes and mash-ups

Links

Do the strictures of intellectual property right law

- stifle creativity?
- hinder development of UGC?

Are the rights of content developers and publishers to exploit their works seriously threatened by UGC?

Is the current model of IPR still valid or appropriate? What other options are available?

Does the use of ugc technology necessitate open resources?

Educational text book publishers are increasingly paying writers a fee for service rather than royalties, and calling them content developers rather than authors.

Licensing

Strategic position of CLI/DET

Learning materials created by DET are paid for by taxpayers.

Questions

1. What would happen if all our materials were freely available to RTOs, not only for commercial use but for adaptation?
 - a. Loss of income from licensing?
 - b. Providing content sets the agenda and helps standardize quality
 - c. Competition on service related value adding
 - d. Collaborative approach to maintaining currency through UGC
 - e. Loss of control over revisions and updates (badging and standards)

Types of issues:

Global issues

The social challenge

UGC Increases the gap between the digitally literate and those who are excluded from it by reasons of age or lack of resources.

Cultural fragmentation may result as each culture creates its own strand rather than being exposed to and participating in a common core of shared cultural content

Policy issues

What kinds of changes are necessary for effective participation in open education?

Education is understandably slow to change and adapt. How does it co-exist with the rapidity of change in technology and communication?

How can newcomers best be introduced to new expectations and methodologies?

Content issues

Discussion boards

Intellectual property rights

Availability of TAFE material to competing RTOs

Reason for not making it freely available is that we want to produce income from it. Does this happen currently? Are any of our online products licensed for use by another RTO?

What would happen if we did release them for public use? Are our teaching and other associated services competitive?

Is there a case for saying that our resources are created with public money and therefore should be freely available? Would the provision of such a public service be in the best interests of training and education in NSW/Australia?

Provision of free to use material is a way of setting the agenda, determining the parameters and imposing some kind of quality control. Leave this to the market and chaos could result.

TAFE owns outright copyright in all the material it produces. Most educational publishers have (usually exclusive) licences to use the materials they publish, but are thereby restricted in creating adaptations and must negotiate multi-use with the copyright holder (the author).

Making material freely available to RTOs means not only that they can access it and use it; they can also change it and adapt it for their own purposes, and without acknowledgement or attribution.

Technical issues

Access

Training

Closely related to accessibility is training. The creation of UGC for educational purposes requires basic and sometimes more advanced ICT skills. Younger people will acquire those skills as a matter of course, but older generations and the disabled may warrant special efforts.

Behaviour issues

In addition to inappropriate content, some sites need to proscribe inappropriate use such as propositioning, stalking and harassing.

Cookies

Wikiversity requires that cookies be turned on

Cost issues

Training

Monitoring

Maintenance