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Minutes of the OLCOS Expert Workshop 1

Salzburg Research, Salzburg, 16 January 2006

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1 General information on the expert workshop

1.1 Organisation, date/time & location

Organisation: Salzburg Research (Project Co-ordinator), Veronika Hornung-Prähauser

Date/time: 16 January 2006, 14:00-18:00

Location: Techno-Z, Veranstaltungszentrum, Jakob Haringer-Str. 5/III, A-5020 Salzburg

1.2 Workshop context

The expert workshop took place in the framework of the project kick-off and first Project Management Meeting.

1.3 Workshop documentation

The following content has been extracted from the Minutes of the project kick-off to provide a separate documentation of the workshop, i.e. independent from the presentations and results of the project management.

1.4 Participants

1.4.1 Invited experts

Graham Attwell	Pontydysgu (Bridge to Learning), Wales /UK
Raymond Elferink	RayCom B.V., Netherlands
Georg Pleger	Creative Commons, Austria

1.4.2 OLCOS partners

Peter Baumgartner	Fernuniversität Hagen, Germany
Timo Väliharju	Mediamaisteri Group, Finland
Nuria Ferran Ferrer	Open University of Catalonia, Spain
Julià Minguillón Alfonso	Open University of Catalonia, Spain
Jennifer Jahnke	ecmc European Centre for Media Competence, Germany
Harald Gapski	ecmc European Centre for Media Competence, Germany

Ildiko Mazar	European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN), United Kingdom
Diana Bischof	Salzburg Research Forschungsgesellschaft – EduMedia, Austria
Veronika Hornung-Prähauser	Salzburg Research Forschungsgesellschaft – EduMedia, Austria
Guntram Geser	Salzburg Research Forschungsgesellschaft, Austria
Andreas Gruber	Salzburg Research Forschungsgesellschaft, Austria
Wernher Behrendt	Salzburg Research Forschungsgesellschaft, Austria

1.5 Agenda

The expert workshop took place in the afternoon of the first day of the OLCOS kick-off meeting (session 3).

However, the invited experts already participated in the morning sessions that included presentations of the background of the OLCOS project partners, the OLCOS project ideas and envisaged results, and some first discussions on core concepts such as an “open content value chain”.

Workshop presentations and discussions

14:00 - 15:00:	Georg Pleger, Coordinator of Creative Commons Austria (presentation and discussion)
15:00 -16:00:	Raymond Elferink, Project manager BAZAAR (presentation and discussion)
16:00-17:00:	Graham Attwell, Project manager SIGOSEE (presentation and discussion)
17:00-18:00:	Final discussion and wrap-up

2 Short summaries of the presentations and discussions

2.1 Georg Pleger, Creative Commons Austria

<http://creativecommons.org>

Mr Pleger first gave a brief presentation on the history and concept of Creative Commons, and then showed a video that explained the principles of CC.

He also provided suggestions on how to develop an integral perspective and roadmap. In particular, he thought that

- OLCOS should be aware of what it will demand to create and actually live in a sustainable knowledge society, and
- a culture of sharing (“sharing culture”) will be needed to foster the concept of OER,

Further, Mr Pleger suggested to consider the work of Ken Wilber et al., André Gorz (such as „Wissen, Wert und Kapital“ (also available in English), and take a look at Wissensallmende.de.

Special topic: Implementation of cc in search engines

Nutch: The engine was Beta version, is now out of operation

Yahoo: cc has been implemented

Google: is in process

Firefox: implemented

Expectations regarding the OLCOS project

Possible “re-use” of OLCOS in the Creative Commons initiative, and CC in OLCOS.

Cooperation with OLCOS

This may particularly concentrate on

- informing educational target groups about standardised open content licenses
- production and distribution of common information material and publications
- iCommons: Promotion of a broader perspective: free culture, open content is part of this

2.2 Raymond Elferink, BAZAAR

Mr Elferink outlined the motivation to launch the new project BAZAAR (that builds on results of the SIGOSSEE project) and receives funding under the same programme as OLCOS.

- BAZAAR started in 01/2006 and focus is on open source tools.
- The project will also cover “emergent issues”, i.e. take up new topics as they emerge during the project.
- In the projects driven by Elferink (and Graham Attwell, see below), the aim is to be at the edge between “pedagogy & technology” (for example, importance of interfaces).
- Yet, there is a considerable gap between tool developers and practitioners (e.g., teachers, tutors,...).
- There exist a lot of tools, but, little opportunity to try and evaluate.
- It is important to know more about how people use tools, and what functions and features they would like to find in tools
- In the development of certain tools, the potential users should be able to develop “a sense of ownership”, and take an interest in their further development
- BAZAAR organise “show-me days”, i.e. gatherings of developers and users to demonstrate and discuss the further development of tools from a user perspective. (For example, at SIGOSSEE conferences, people could create IMS LD scenarios with Coppercore).
- “Sandbox” area of Bazaar’s Website: should ideally allow for testing interoperability of tools, and tools and content.

Expectations regarding the OLCOS project

Aim high, 2006+ will be a most interesting time.

2.3 Graham Attwell, SIGOSSEE

Mr Attwell is co-ordinator of the Special Interest Group in Open Source Software for Education in Europe (SIGOSSEE).

He considered his presentation to serve as „food for thought“ and starting point for a joint discussion on issues such as “*If OER is the solution, what is the problem?*” (Jan Hylén, OECD) and to consider how OLCOS could cooperate with other projects working in the same area (including BAZAAR, SIGOSSEE and others):

In his presentation, Attwell addressed some important issues in open learning (yet, in the .ppt only in the form of short statements). Below we provide notes taken during the discussion of these issues, and include some further ideas.

- Educational resources: What constitutes an educational resource? The “learning objects” approach (and the debate about such objects) is definitely dead. The approach tried to cut away all contexts of learning processes. The learning in “learning objects” was completely misleading.

- Why only content in digital formats? – The “content” used in learning processes may be, and in fact often are, physical objects of all sorts. On the Web we may name and reference anything with an URI.
- “Reusable”: Here standards will be very important, however, which ones? Only “open standards”?
- “Interoperable”: What about “Word” and other document formats that are in broad use?
- “Free”: What does this mean in terms of licences? (mainly non-commercial reuse?)
- “Accessible”: Here metadata will be very important. However, a metadata schemes such as LOM is a non-starter for many people in the educational sector (Baumgartner mentioned the LOM survey that found that 65% of the LOM fields are not used at all; “Mr LOM” Eric Ducal: “metadata forms must die”.) What about Dublin Core “with a little bit more”?
- “Quality”: When it comes to issues of quality, do we need some “national bodies”? What kind of peer systems could work? Most important in defining “high-quality content” may be the context of use; high-quality depends on specific contexts.
- “Ownership and passion”: People may be passionate about content they have created. Yet, when it comes to open content, how is it possible to foster passion about content created by others? (repurposing vs. creating)
- Tools: Regarding tools, an important issue is that there exist so many of them. How to evaluate their usefulness, and direct the right people to the right tools for what they would like to do?
- Sustainability: There is also the question of when to let things die. What do we know about the decay rate of educational resources? There exists some work on this from JISC (e-Learning Programme).
- Learning: Learning is taking place in highly contextualised settings and is basically a social activity (see above note on the “learning objects” approach, which could not cope with this fact).
- Provision of relevant content for certain types of learning activities: There is an old idea that teachers should create or select and provide the content. There is a very promising alternative: People forming their own learning community as well as personal learning environments. Educational content from institutions only will be one element in this, and maybe a smaller one; peer-to-peer technology could form an important element of this. The breakthrough of this alternative would be a revolution in learning; hence, it is a threat to the established institutions. Because they are used to control the learning environment.
- The most widely used learning system is not Blackboard, WebCT, Moodle,... it is Google.
 - Is it?
- What do we mean by “learning system”? – WebCT?, The Open University of Catalonia?, Interactions between learners?, ...?
- How do people learn today? – For the most part this is through informal learning; Attwells “Searching-Lurking-Contributing”-theory of learning processes: (1) They google some links. (2) Then find denser places of content, blogs, communities. (3) Become “lurkers”: come back to see what is going on. (4) Develop into contributors; involves the question of “legitimate peripheral participation” (if there is a centre).

- Different learning cultures, mentalities: This includes things such as expected level of privacy, personal expression in public spheres,... (is different in German, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, Asian... cultures)

Expectations regarding the OLCOS project

A major shared issue may be to develop a better understanding in theory and practice of Communities of Practice (see section 4 below).

3 How to cooperate with other projects

Suggestions by Graham Attwell and other experts on how to cooperate with BAZAAR, SIGOSEE and other projects included:

- Open and shared environments did not so far succeed in EU-funded projects; mostly it have been people who were messengers between projects.
- RSS feeds and aggregators could be a useful instrument to exchange information and results from ongoing activities.
- Also the reuse of ideas, content and other (interim) results between projects could be a possible. This would form a real cross-over.
- Sharing work in progress, also half-finished ideas. This could be done using a Wiki; this would also change the style of producing content
- Shared Web spaces for specific practices (could be the nucleus of a CoP?)
- The information spaces that are created should be inclusive.
- There is of course also the opportunity to have shared meetings and seminars.
- Joint publications
- Align and together carry out dissemination activities.
- Further it was thought important to be aware of relevant existing and forthcoming reports from other projects or institutions, in particular, the OECD/CERI survey on Open Educational Resources.

4 Special discussion topic: Community of Practice (CoP)

In the morning presentation of possible results of „the OLCOS expedition”, the following has been mentioned: “A large and growing OLCOS Community of Practise is established that further develops the concept and promotes institutional developments for OER on a European level”.

In the expert workshop the importance of Communities of Practice was discussed further in some detail.

Graham Attwell, who takes a keen interest in CoP's, thought

- that the envisioned OLCOS CoP seems to be more like a (distributed) Think Tank or Circle,
- however, it may be difficult to effectively bind a CoP to OLCOS,
- but contributions may be received from interested people (not only in the framework of workshop participations)

Further, an appropriate definition of CoP was discussed? – Workshop participants thought that this should include:

- Shared commitment
- A focus on the development of certain competences
- Sustained joint activities
- A shared repertoire of resources, experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems

An important issue also was the question what particularly could motivate others to become a participant in an OLCOS CoP:

- In the discussion it was understood that OLCOS will need to first become an acknowledged service before people external to the core project group would start to participate.
- There will need to be clear „entry points“ and areas for participation.
- There must be something highly attractive to be involved in (for example, Prof. Baumgartner thought that one such point of attraction could be the taxonomy of Open Educational Resources which will provide access to information on useful content, tools, and other educational resources. For teachers it could allow for finding open content for learning scenarios that match certain categories of knowledge (e.g. according to the Anderson/Krathwohl taxonomy).
- Also important to provide may be a database of questions.