

ARTICLE

When Two Worlds Don't Collide: Can Social Curation Address the Marginalisation of Open Educational Practices and Resources from Outside Academia?

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A canyonesque gulf has long existed between open academia and many external subject communities. Since 2011, we have been developing and piloting the public open scholar role (Coughlan and Perryman 2012) - involving open academics discovering, sharing and discussing open educational resources (OER) with online communities outside formal education in order to help bridge this gulf. In 2013 we took the public open scholar into Facebook (Perryman and Coughlan, 2013) to reach an international audience of autism-focussed Facebook groups in India, Africa and Malaysia, with a combined membership of over 5000 people.

Performing the public open scholar role within Facebook led to our learning from group members about new resources produced by subject communities outside formal education, for example by voluntary sector organisations, government and professional bodies. These resources are surprisingly numerous and compare favourably with those from universities. Seeking to source more such resources we conducted a systematic large-scale search of free online courses, recording not only the number of learning materials available, but also how easy it was to find them.

We found that provision from formal education, especially universities, dominates the returned results when searching for free online courses. Consequently, resources from beyond formal education, while they exist, are difficult to find. Indeed, most aggregators and repositories proudly state that the free online courses they list are from 'Top Universities', appearing oblivious to provision from external subject communities. We extended our research to cover e-textbooks and found a similar situation, with content from formal education again dominating provision.

On the basis of these findings we suggest that the prominence of university-provided content within search aggregators not only marginalises externally produced resources, relegating them to even more obscurity than has been the case thus far, but also marginalises the open educational practices that were involved in the production of these resources. We propose that the OER movement's questions about ways of involving end-users as co-producers may be answered by looking to external subject communities and, accordingly, we should be supporting and learning from these communities. In addition, there is a need for further research into the open educational practices of external subject communities, who are clearly more than just passive consumers of resources and are involved in both producing and adapting OER.

Our research has also led to our further developing the public open scholar role to include online content curation as a part of the process, on the basis of evidence indicating that online curation has the potential to help increase the discoverability of resources and raise awareness of open educational practices from beyond academia. In particular, we suggest that 'social curation' (Seitzinger, 2014) - which foregrounds sharing curated collections as a component of the curation process - has a key role in this regard. We also suggest that further research in this area could be beneficial, for example in exploring the potential for librarians to become involved in curating OER from outside academia.

Keywords: Open educational resources; non-formal education; public open scholar; open educational practices; curation

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Introduction

The open education and open educational resources (OER) movements remain almost inseparable from the higher education institutions from which they emerged and little attention is given to the wealth of OER that are being produced by subject communities outside higher education, for example professional and regulatory bodies. The 2013 report by the Hewlett Foundation (The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2013) touches upon the massive potential for OER use and production beyond higher (and formal) education when stating that:

'By enabling virtually anyone to tap into, translate and tailor educational materials previously reserved only for students at elite universities, OER has the potential to jump start careers and economic development in communities that lag behind. Millions worldwide have already opened this educational lockbox, but if OER is going to democratize learning and transform the classroom and teaching, then it must move from the periphery of education practice to centre stage.' (The Hewlett Foundation, 2013, p. 4)

Subject communities outside academia could very well be the key to this 'lockbox' for many people and moving to 'centre stage' will involve paying attention to open educational resources and practices from beyond formal education. Relevantly, the UK-based OER4Adults report by Falconer *et al* (2013, p. 4) recommended that the OER movement should 'recognise that 'learning' takes place everywhere' and should 'extend the range of people and organisations who produce and use resources' and 'encourage OER development by organisations and communities outside mainstream education' (p. 46). The authors explain:

'An assumption we often encountered is that universities are best placed to produce quality OER. However, during our study we sourced excellent examples of different types of organisations producing OER specifically for lifelong learners - sometimes in partnership with professional educators, but often in fields not normally touched by mainstream education. These organisations included private sector companies, public sector institutions, professional bodies and third sector organisations (e.g. Social Care Institute for Excellence, OpenScout, C4EO). All types of organisations should be encouraged to consider their contributions to learning, triggering a re-evaluation of inter-relationships.' (Falconer *et al*, 2013, p. 46)

Since 2011, we have been working with subject communities outside formal education when developing and piloting a new role for open academics, which we have named 'the public open scholar' (Coughlan and Perryman, 2012). The role involves open academics working with online communities outside formal education who might benefit

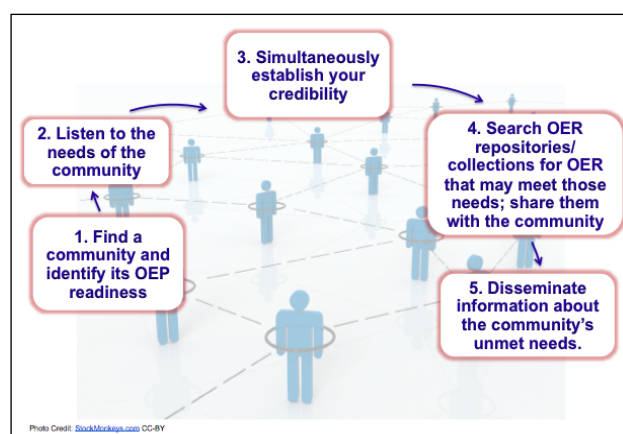


Figure 1: The public open scholar role.

from OER, identifying members' expressed needs and then sourcing OER to meet those needs (see **Figure 1**). As such, the role is an extension of Weller's 'digital scholar' - 'someone who employs digital, networked and open approaches to demonstrate specialism in a field' (Weller, 2011, Chapter 1). We have developed this role, with the aim of increasing awareness of open educational resources and disseminating information about the resource needs of people outside the academy. The public open scholar role was piloted in 2011 within UK voluntary sector online welfare communities who were using bulletin board-style forums for information sharing and peer support (see Coughlan and Perryman, 2012) and in 2013 we took the public open scholar into Facebook (Perryman and Coughlan, 2013) to reach an international audience of autism-focused Facebook groups in India, Africa and Malaysia, with a combined membership of over 5000 people.

A wealth of resources from external subject communities

Whilst performing the public open scholar role within Facebook we began learning from Facebook group members about new resources that had been produced outside formal education, for example by voluntary sector organisations, government and professional bodies. **Table 1** shows a selection of free Autism-related online resources produced outside formal education, some of which are openly licensed and **Table 2** shows a selection of free Autism-related e-textbooks, again some of which are openly licensed.

Our paper is grounded in our work within the OER movement, which sees OER as being both free to use and openly licensed in such a way that allows re-use and adaptation (The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2013). However, we have included in the above tables resources that are free to use, but which are not openly licensed. Our decision is informed by recent research by the OER Research Hub (2013) indicating that 'while many educators state that open licensing is important, this does not always transfer into their own practice' and that 'for learners the presence of an open licence is not seen as important'. For the current study, the distinction between open and non-open licensing is less of an issue than the matter

<i>Type of resource</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Producer</i>	<i>URL</i>	<i>Licence</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Interactive courses (VLE)	Autism Spectrum Disorders	Geneva Centre for Autism (Canada)	http://elearning.autism.net/	CC-BY-NC-SA	A suite of nine free modules aimed at parents and those working with school-age children and young people. Moodle VLE available in both English and French.
	Autism Internet Modules (AIM)	Ohio's Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI)	http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/	All rights reserved	43 comprehensive & sophisticated modules - a broad range, similar in style to those of the Geneva Centre for Autism. 138,000 users.
Interactive courses (Flash)	Inclusive education: Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders	Spanish Government	http://www.ite.educacion.es/formacion/enred/materiales_en_pruebas_2013/tea_2013/index.htm	CC-BY-SA	10 modules in Spanish only. The first five offer relevant knowledge about people with ASD and their needs, and the following are guidelines for an oriented educational intervention.
	Introduction to Autism	Southampton Hampshire Isle of Wight Portsmouth Autism Partnership Board, UK	http://www.formsportsmouth.gov.uk/autismawareness/	Not stated	20 to 30 minutes e-learning module, powered by Learning Pool. Offers a Certificate of Completion for Autism Awareness
US-style courses (videos & handouts)	Creating Classroom Connections for Children with Autism	www.danya.com - a US social impact company	http://www.autismonline.org	All rights reserved	One of ten free modules. It's a 40-page pdf document with an accompanying 15-minute YouTube video.
	Autism Case Training	US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/ACT/class.html	Not copyrighted - attribution only	Videos, PDF handouts, slideshows, guides and worksheets; 10 modules in total.
Collection	Autism Toolbox	Scottish Government	http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/06111319/0	UK Open Government Licence (similar to CC-BY)	A comprehensive package for schools from the Scottish Government. In total it's a 224-page PDF document, but it can also be downloaded in nine separate parts

Table 1: Free autism-related online resources.

of whether resources and practices from beyond the academy are being marginalised.

While examining such resources in depth during our public open scholar work it became apparent that free online resources from outside formal education are surprisingly numerous, for example the 4000 free textbooks from The National Academies Press (<http://www.nap.edu>), and compare favourably with those from universities in being pedagogically sound, properly referenced, well-supported with evidence and up-to-date. In addition, the status of the authors of such resources tends to be clear (for example, their qualifications are given, showing their authority and the provenance of the resources). The Good and Bad Science of Autism (<http://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/content/930593/>

[understanding_autism/understanding_autism/our_publications](http://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/content/930593/understanding_autism/understanding_autism/our_publications)) is a notable example. Written by geneticist Dr. Neil Walsh and neuroscientist Dr. Elisabeth Hurley, the 94-page book brings together scientific research from multiple disciplines including neuroscience, genetics and psychology. They are writing from within the context of an autism charity and they interpret the science to make it accessible. In addition, the examples are very relevant to charity members.

Methods

Seeking to source more high quality resources from outside formal education, and motivated by Falconer *et al.*'s OER4Adults report (Falconer *et al.*, 2013), we conducted a systematic large scale search, recording not only the

Title	Author	URL	Licence	Comments
IACAPAP Textbook of Child and Adolescent Mental Health	International Association for Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions.	http://iacapap.org/iacapap-textbook-of-child-and-adolescent-mental-health	CC-BY-NC	Chapter C.2 of the IACAPAP Textbook covers autism spectrum disorders. This colourful 27-page chapter is up-to-date and has reliable references. IACAPAP also publish a corresponding open-access (CC-BY) journal: www.capmh.com .
Treating Children with Autism	Eric J. Lund & Chris Van Dyke	http://lundvandyke.com/resources/download/autism-treatment	Not stated	A 176 page book written by two doctors who run a private Autism clinic. Downloadable as a complete book or as 15 chapters in PDF.
A Spectrum of Relationships	C. S. Wyatt	http://theautisticme.blogspot.co.uk/2011/03/free-ebook-on-autism-and-relationships.html	Not stated	Free eBook on Autism and Relationships. The author reflects on his own experiences as a diagnosed high-functioning autistic individual. An 81 page abridged edition in ePub format.
A Parent's Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorder	US National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)	http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/a-parents-guide-to-autism-spectrum-disorder/index.shtml	Public Domain	NIMH's useful 27-page booklet is offered in ePub and Mobi formats for e-readers, alongside the common PDF format, and is also published in Spanish.
The Good and Bad Science of Autism	Dr Neil Walsh & Dr Elisabeth Hurley	http://www.autism-westmidlands.org.uk/files/thegood-badscienceofautism_v2.pdf	Free PDF download, all rights reserved	94 pages. An attractive and easy-to-use book designed to introduce the reader to autism research.
Ohio's Parent Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders	Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence (OCALI)	http://www.ocali.org/project/ohio_parent_guide_to_ASD	Free PDF download, all rights reserved	A 274-page manual providing an overview of the world of autism spectrum disorders. Developed by Ohio parents, for Ohio parents.
Educating Children with Autism	US National Research Council	http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10017	Free PDF download, all rights reserved	324 pages. Outlines an interdisciplinary approach to education for children with autism.

Table 2: Free autism-related e-textbooks.

number of learning materials available but also how easy it was to find them. We began by identifying target personae as a means of shaping our search strategies. Our search was based around two typical personae: (1) the parent/carer of a child who they suspect may have autism, or who has been recently diagnosed; (2) teachers and support workers seeking to meet the needs of autistic children in their classes or groups. We decided to search for courses as the complexity of autism cannot easily be reduced into a single book.

With the two personae in mind we began by keeping the search as broad as possible, using the search term 'online autism course' and Google.co.uk. We chose Google for its popularity, and accepted the default Google.co.uk version for UK users. We then varied the search to include the variations 'online ASD course', 'online autism training' and 'free online autism course'. Finally, we compared the Google search results for 'online autism course' with results returned using the search engine Bing. Mindful of the impact of cookies on Google search results, we cleared all cookies and the browser cache before conducting the search and between each episode of searching.

Once the results were returned we closely examined the top 50 results for each search and allocated each result to one of the following categories:

- Courses from universities (subdivided into fee-paying and free for the *free online autism courses* search);
- Courses from colleges and private training companies (subdivided into fee-paying and free for the *free online autism courses* search)
- Lists and aggregator sites
- Courses restricted to members or a particular location
- Open and/or free courses from outside formal education
- Erroneous results, e.g. free newsletters.

We then looked at the balance between formal education and external subject communities.

Results

The results of our search are provided in **Table 3** and represented in **Figure 2**.

<i>Search term and search engine used</i>	<i>Universities</i>	<i>Colleges & private training companies</i>	<i>Lists & aggregator sites</i>	<i>Courses restricted to members or a particular location</i>	<i>Free/open courses from outside formal education</i>	<i>Erroneous results</i>
online autism course - Google UK	16	13	10	8	2	1
online ASD course - Google UK	15	11	9	5	3	7
online autism training - Google UK	5	12	12	12	5	6
online autism course - Bing	9	20	11	4	1	5
free online autism course - Google UK	8	7	9	15	3	8
Total	53	63	51	44	14	27

Table 3: Search results for autism related online courses.

It was clear from the results that the numerous autism courses from outside formal education (nearly 100 are listed in **Table 1**) are hard to find, irrespective of the search term or search engine used. Aggregators and lists fetching, filtering and organising information about courses from multiple online sources represented a high proportion of the search results and we felt it reasonable to assume that our imagined personae would investigate what they had to offer. We therefore conducted a search of the results delivered by aggregators. **Table 4** shows the six most frequently appearing aggregators and lists and gives a breakdown of the online autism courses offered through them.

Here too, we found that formal education provision dominates the returned results, to the total exclusion of provision from elsewhere. Indeed, most aggregators and repositories proudly state that the free online courses they list are from 'top' or 'well-known' universities', appearing oblivious to provision from outside formal education, as shown in **Figure 3**.

Discussion

Our research results clearly indicated that resources from external subject communities were difficult to find and, accordingly, not only were the resources themselves being marginalised but also the open educational practices involved in their creation. In exploring the implications of this, we began to consider the potential of online content curation as a means of improving the discoverability of resources from beyond academia.

Discoverability problems

The prominence of formal education provision within the results returned by both search engines and aggregators has several implications. An obvious implication is that resources produced outside formal education are being marginalised, rendered very difficult to find, especially by people who lack Web search experience.

<i>Aggregator</i>	<i>Result of search for 'autism'</i>
<i>onlinecourses.com</i>	It is not possible to search, only to select from categories; none were relevant.
<i>openculture.com</i>	Yale's autism course x 2
<i>academicearth.org</i>	Yale's autism course x 3, plus 10 YouTube videos from various universities
<i>oedb.org/open</i>	5 courses from universities: Yale, MIT, Liberty (x2) & University of California.
<i>class-central.com</i>	No results
<i>topfreeclasses.com</i>	No results

Table 4: Results of searching aggregators for 'autism'.

As a consequence, learners are prevented from benefiting from a wealth of high quality resources that may be more relevant to their needs than those produced within formal education. Indeed, Falconer et al (2013, p.3) assert that 'approaches that work well in a university context may be less appropriate elsewhere' adding that 'transferring resources produced in one community such as a university to another such as a group of workplace learners can be difficult' (p. 4).

The discoverability problems encountered during our research could be attributable to multiple factors, both active and passive. For example, resource-producers' may employ disparate marketing approaches and universities may be particularly skilled at marketing and syndicating their content. (It is worth noting that one course from Yale appears repeatedly in the results from both search engines and aggregators, with results returned for the course's appearance in Yale's own website, in iTunes and in YouTube. In contrast, the 43 autism modules from the external body the Ohio Center for Autism and Low

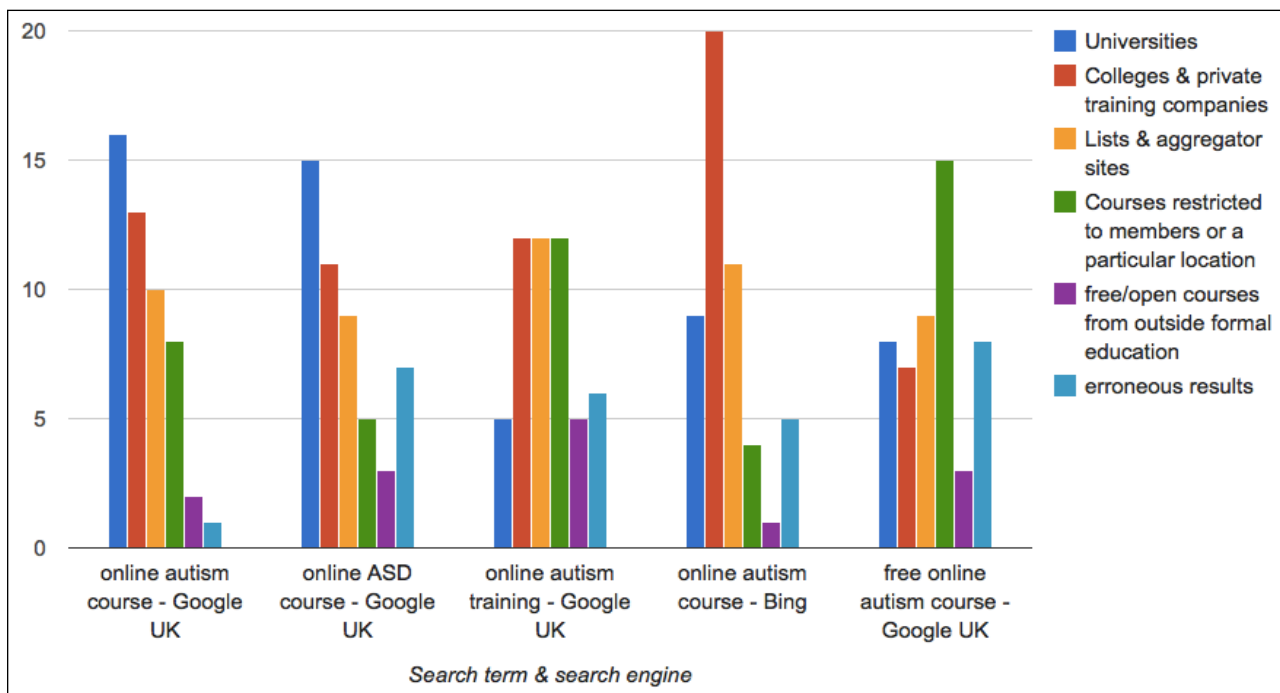


Figure 2: Search results for autism related online courses.

Incidence (<http://www.ocali.org>) rarely appeared in the search results and when they did, they appeared as a single entry.) In addition, the visibility of a resource can be influenced by whether web crawlers can only see metadata, a provided index or the full 'text', and whether that data and text includes popular search terms. Paid-for advertising can also raise the search engine profile of specific results as can the number of sites that refer to a particular web page (with larger sites gaining more referrals and a higher profile). In this regard the aggregators, which only link to university sites, further exacerbate the problem.

Our findings indicate a need for an impartial open content search facility presenting resources from within and outside formal education in order to help discoverability of the latter. The Solvonauts open content search engine (<http://solvonauts.org>) and the OpenScout open management content search facility (<http://learn.openscout.net/>) are both very much a step in the right direction.

Marginalisation of open educational practices

Falconer et al (2013, p. 4) state that it is important to 'think of OER more broadly than as content'. Accordingly, a further implication of the marginalisation of resources produced beyond formal education is that this, in turn, marginalises the open educational practices that are involved in the production of these resources. For example, an electronic textbook on child and adolescent mental health is freely downloadable on the website of the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (<http://iacapap.org>), a non-governmental professional organization that serves as an umbrella for child and adolescent mental health associations and societies throughout the world. The book's 42 chapters were written collaboratively by over 90 international experts, particularly for the benefit of professionals

who would otherwise not be able to purchase a printed textbook. IACAPAP are committed to updating the book annually and actively invite feedback from users on any alterations or improvements needed. They are particularly sensitive to issues of cultural and ethnic variations and interpretations and are keen to offer resources in other than English in future. The book is released with a CC-BY-NC licence. Notably, the IACAPAP textbook did not appear in our Google search results.

The OER movement has increasingly emphasised the need to move beyond top-down content production to consider ways of involving end-users as co-producers and our findings suggest that much can be learned by looking at the practices of (and supporting) external communities such as IACAPAP. Falconer et al (2013, p. 46) recommend that collaborative relationships should be developed between universities and organisations in other sectors, reporting that:

'We identified numerous potential benefits of collaboration of HE institutions with public, private and third sector organisations to produce OER. These benefits include: an increase in the number and range of resources available for adults and life-long learners; development of resources that can improve the employability of registered students in HE institutions; useful links and networks for learners involved with their potential future sectors; improved understanding of academic and industry/sector needs which can impact on curriculum development to reflect better sector requirements; new business models for the production of OER.'

Working with external communities could also help academics to be relevant in their work, to be better informed



Figure 3: Screenshot of the OpenCulture header.

and to be more up-to-date about topical issues in their subject area. As a result they would be better able to respond to the real identified needs of external subject communities. However, should the open educational practices of communities outside formal education be marginalised by the dominance of practices and resources from within formal education the potential for constructive, mutually beneficial collaboration may be compromised.

The potential of online content curation

In the course of our research into the discoverability of resources from outside academia we began to realise the importance of an open educational practice that is used both within and outside the academy: digital curation using sites such as Pinterest and Scoopit. Bijsterveld (2013, p. 44) acknowledges the value of online content curation within the context of formal education, noting that 'It is difficult for students and instructors to find the right content, which means that they are not maximising the potential of OER'. Bijsterveld cites Masterman *et al.*'s (2011) assertion that 'searching reveals either too much about a subject – meaning that it is only checked superficially – or too little that is of good quality' (Bijsterveld, 2013, p. 44), adding that up-to-date content curation around specific topics can help instructors and learners to find relevant resources (see also Kanter, 2012, and Robertson, 2012). Kanter (2012) points out that 'interpretation is important' when curating free online content, while Robertson (2012) suggests that 'the information specialists at libraries can play an important role here, given that libraries specialise in this kind of work'.

Two case studies illustrate how digital curation might help improve the discoverability of open resources from outside the academy, while also providing a useful comparison point with the search results reported earlier: Tony Coughlan's CYP-media project and Suzanne Schlechte's Pinterest boards on early childhood education.

Case study 1: CYP-media

CYP-media (see **Figure 4**) is a dynamic online collection of free eLearning, textbooks and journals for the children and young people's (CYP) workforce - a sector comprising roles such as childminding, nurseries, youth clubs, fostering and adoption, but with low-paid workers and volunteers particularly in mind. It was developed and is curated by one of this paper's authors, Tony Coughlan, and has

<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Number of resources in CYP-media</i>
Charities, government and other public-sector	35
Private sector	2
Universities	22
Aggregators	0
Media etc.	12

Table 5: Publishers of resources in CYP-media.

three complementary components - a blog (cyp-media.org) plus two communication channels: a Facebook page (fb.me/freeCYPmedia) and a Twitter account (twitter.com/CYPmedia).

CYP-media was developed in response to a growing realisation that there were an increasing number of multimedia resources scattered around the Internet, but they could be hard to find, of unknown quality, and vague about whether they might be pirated or copyright materials. The curator Tony Coughlan is well qualified to make an assessment of these resources, firstly from being an experienced tutor and e-learning author himself, and secondly from also being a Chair and Director of a children's charity.

The mostly-female children and young people's workforce faces two major hurdles to participating in education – firstly financial, with up to 20% being unpaid volunteers, and secondly, childcare responsibilities, which can be an obstacle to attending face-to-face sessions. The free e-learning promoted through CYP-media responds to both these obstacles and offers learning opportunities to many who might otherwise be excluded. An equally important feature of this project is that it makes it easier for other educators to incorporate free digital resources in their own teaching, confident about their quality and any licensing conditions about their use.

On the CYP-media blog (which serves as the index), Tony writes a short review of each permanent resource that is featured, including its source, academic level, ease of use and approximately how long it takes to study. The resources listed began with BBC podcasts and simple e-learning modules, but have expanded to include Facebook subject groups, MOOCs, e-books, e-journals and a serious computer game. The original publishers of the 70 items that Tony has listed so far are shown in **Table 5**.

Given the widespread publicity about increased university fees, the target audience of volunteers and low-paid workers are themselves unlikely to be searching the websites of professional institutes and universities for free resources, so the CYP-media blog posts are disseminated through the linked Facebook page and Twitter account. Through these, the project is reaching significant numbers of people; the CYP-media blog attracts an average of over 200 views per week, with a total of more than 14,000 views over its lifetime. In addition, there are up to



Figure 4: Screenshot of the CYP-media blog.

<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Number of resources in Suzanne Schlechte's Early Childhood Education Pinterest board</i>
Charities, government and other public-sector	11
Private sector	8
Universities	7
Aggregators	4
Media etc.	4

Table 6: Publishers of resources in Suzanne Schlechte's Early Childhood Education Pinterest board.

2,000 views of the CYP-media Facebook page each week and the CYP-media Twitter account has over 1,500 followers. The Facebook page in particular is a good source of feedback on the resources, along with suggestions for other resources to include in future. It was through the

Facebook page that Tony encountered another curator, Suzanne Schlechte, whose work is described next.

Case study 2: Suzanne Schlechte's Pinterest boards

The second case study features an independent curator from outside formal education - Suzanne Schlechte. Suzanne is a child care provider in British Columbia, Canada. She runs the My Buddies Daycare centre in Richmond BC, and has 20 years experience of working with children. Over the years, she has regularly shared the ideas that have worked at My Buddies through her blog, Facebook, and now Pinterest (www.pinterest.com/mybuddiesandi/early-childhood-education) (see Figure 5). One of Suzanne's Pinterest boards focuses on Early Childhood Education and is described as "A growing collection of resources, courses & training sites available free of charge".

In June 2014, the board had attracted 700 followers, and featured 42 pins (resources). The original source of these items is shown in Table 6.

These are markedly different patterns from the results we found by using Google searches. It is not possible to directly compare either Suzanne's Pinterest board or CYP-media with our Google search results as the subjects are different; we were searching on autism, whereas Suzanne's focus is early childhood education. However, they are neighbouring topics, and the curation at CYP-media covers both topics.

Suzanne explains that she became motivated to curate her collection of resources after struggling to find learning materials herself:

Many years ago, before widespread Internet use, I set out to acquire some knowledge in the field of early childhood education (ECE). I was already a home child care provider and there were very few educational options available to me that did not involve closing my business and attending classes. This wasn't a good choice for me and I ended up taking some classes through a correspondence school. Years later, I was able to take evening classes in E.C.E that built upon the knowledge I had already acquired.

On another occasion, I was trying to help one of my daycare children with their speech. It was so difficult to find the information I needed! I did finally find one CD of instruction that I purchased to use. It amazed me that more materials of that nature were not readily available. There is more information out there now, as bloggers with speech pathology training have taken to the internet.

It's only been in the last year or so that a few classes have come online for child care provider training and these are directly connected to the government. (Food Safety and Child Care Seat Safety) Of course there are some colleges that operate online, too, but it's the short courses to keep up to date on current info that are particularly hard to find online.

Now today, it is my hope that anyone who has the desire to learn about children has the opportunity to do so. The ECE pinboard I created has so many good links to information and resources. I was excited at all the good information that is out there! (Schlechte, 2014)

The value of social curation

CYP-Media and Suzanne Schlechte's Pinterest collections share a common feature beyond their content - the sharing practices that allow the resources in these collections to be found easily by people who have pressing needs, but who are not experts in Internet searching. In 2008 librarian and digital curator Neil Beagrie 'noticed a new phenomenon of users creating personal digital collections and projected challenges ahead for individuals in organizing and preserving information, but also in determining how they could share the artefacts they collected effectively to an audience' (Seitzinger, 2014, p. 412). Joyce

Seitzinger (2014) identifies sharing as a key component of one type of online curation - 'social curation' - which she suggests is a distinct practice from digital curation and content curation. Seitzinger (2014, p. 415) explains that the process of social curation 'always has four phases: discovery, selection, collection and sharing' and is performed by an individual 'for a social purpose such as learning, collaboration, identity expression or community participation'.

Librarians as curators

While CYP-Media and Suzanne Schlechte's Pinterest boards function as informal, social curation, there is just as much scope to increase awareness of resources and practices from beyond the academy through established information management specialists such as librarians. In recent years librarians have seen great changes in the scope of their role and in 2006 Dempsey predicted that 'in the short term, the library needs to begin...developing digital curation services'. Six years on the Libraries Survey Report (Bueno-de-la-Fuente *et al.*, 2012) recommended more involvement of librarians in content-focused OER initiatives. A year later the influential Surf Report (Bijsterveld, 2013) assigned a new role to libraries in higher education institutions that could be replicable outside formal education, proposing that:

'The task of the library at a higher education institution is to search for and collect information for the staff and students. In order to carry out that task, the library employs information specialists; these would make excellent content curators for their particular discipline. Besides finding the right articles about a particular topic, they can also find OER for that topic, make them accessible, and add comments. After all, content curation means more than merely collecting links. It is extremely important for the information to be placed in a context.' (Bijsterveld, 2013, p. 46)

Extending the public open scholar role

Returning to the public open scholar role - the original catalyst for our researching the availability and discoverability of resources outside formal education - we feel there is justification for further developing the role to include social curation. Such curation was closely linked with the original conceptualisation of the public open scholar role, though on a needs-led basis rather than the object-led basis that typifies much online content curation, and involving communities of like-minded people interacting with resources that had been shared with them within their own environment, be it online forums (Coughlan and Perryman, 2012) or Facebook groups (Perryman and Coughlan, 2013). Initially though curation was not an essential component of the role.

However, the research findings reported in this paper highlight the usefulness of the public open scholar curating and sharing one or more collections in connection with the role, as this could help to increase the discoverability of resources from outside formal education. A public open

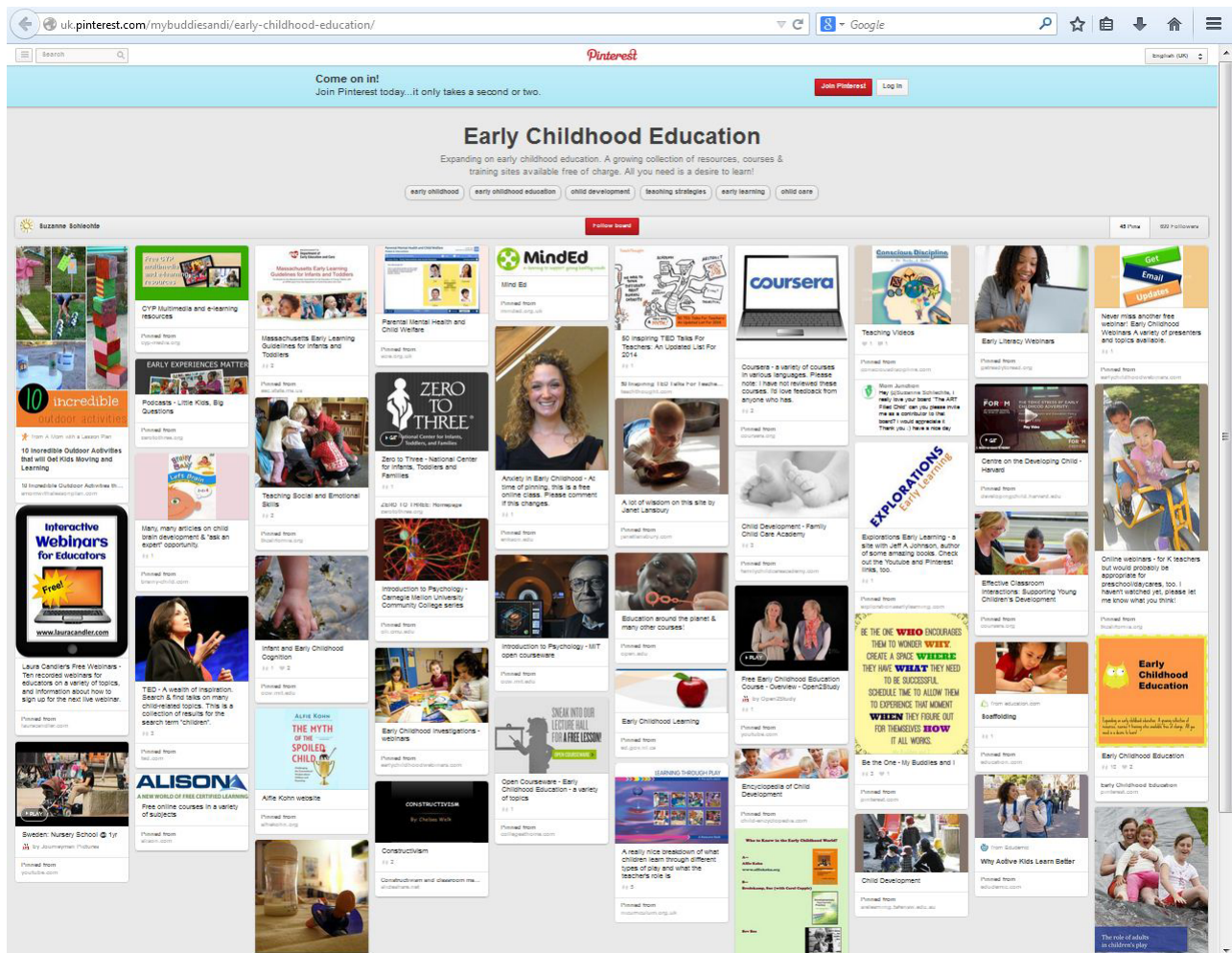


Figure 5: Screenshot of Suzanne Schlechte's Pinterest board on early childhood education.

scholar would gather the content for their collection(s) while performing step 4 of the role (see Figure 6), having listened to the needs of the communities with which they are working (step 2). The curated collection would have a reach that extends beyond the immediate context of the communities identified in step 1, helping to overcome search problems for content produced outside formal education. The public open scholar's professional and academic credentials would enhance the collections' credibility. In addition, their interpretation and contextualisation adds value to the resources, and their curating could serve as a useful quality control filter.

Conclusion

Our research offers clear evidence that free and open resources from outside academia are being marginalised and are hard to find using conventional searching. In addition, our study findings indicate the existence of very active subject communities outside the academy whose open practices are not necessarily recognised within academia and are also being marginalised. As such, our research adds weight to the existing literature asserting the need for the open education and OER movements to broaden their scope and to support, promote and, indeed, value resource production, use and re-use by communities outside formal education. In outlining

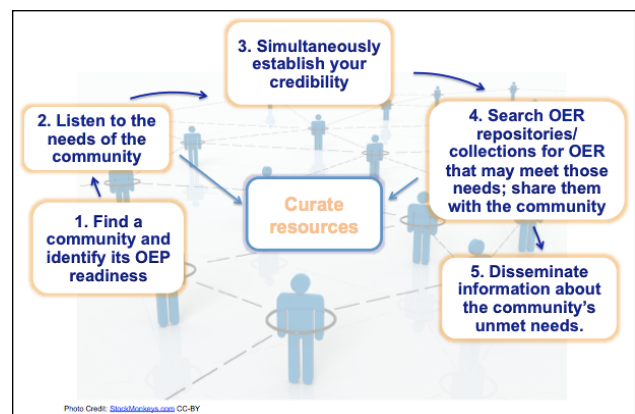


Figure 6: The revised public open scholar role.

open educational practices beyond the academy, and the differing needs of learners within and outside formal education, our study also links with recent research into the use of OER by informal learners (e.g. Law, Perryman and Law, 2013; OER Research Hub, 2014). Additional research building on our study findings might usefully investigate in more depth the open educational practices of external subject communities, who are clearly more than just passive consumers of resources, being involved in both producing and adapting OER to meet their own specific needs.

Our research has also led to our further developing the public open scholar role to include social curation as a part of the process. This development has been informed by our research findings indicating that online content curation has the potential to help increase the discoverability of resources from beyond academia, and the awareness of open educational practices of communities outside formal education, especially when following a similar sharing-focused format to that shown in CYP-Media and Suzanne Schlechte's Pinterest boards. However, a brief overview of digital curation suggests that online content curators more typically curate articles and blog posts rather than resources and courses. Further research in this area could therefore be beneficial, for example in exploring the potential for librarians to become more involved in curating OER from outside academia.

Thus far the OER movement has failed to address the chasm between the two worlds of academia and external subject communities. Our research has highlighted what can happen when these two worlds don't collide, and how social curation and the recognition of open educational practices from beyond academia can benefit academics, professionals, formal and informal learners alike.

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