

Report on the CDLOR Associates' First Workshop

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Introduction

The CDLOR Associate Partners' first workshop took place on October 20, 2005, at the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Enhancement, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. The goal of the workshop was to explore the key issues in the use of learning object repositories (LORs), particularly in relation to the communities coalescing around these repositories. Another goal of the workshop was mapping the issues against types of communities, as well as identification of potential and tested solutions to these issues. The following Associate/Collaborative Partners participated in the workshop: Aberdeen University, Edinburgh University LORE, Stor Curam (currently SIESWE Learning Exchange), University of Ireland Galway, UHI Millennium Institute, JORUM, The Spoken Word project, DIDET, and WM-Share project. The aim of this report is to summarise the process and the outcomes of the workshop.

Process

Following a brief introduction of the CDLOR project by the Project Manager Sarah Currier (see the attached Resource Pack, file Appendix1-currier.ppt), prof. Allison Littlejohn, Project Director, and Anoush Margaryan, Research Fellow, outlined a number of key dimensions of communities coalescing around LORs, as well as some generic issues in using LORs to support learning. The dimensions and issues were based on the findings of the literature review currently being carried out by the CDLOR project team. The key dimensions included:

1. Geographic range (national, international, institutional)
2. Educational sector (HE, FE, school)
3. Subject-matter/discipline
4. Characteristics of LO resources (sound files, lecture notes, modules, etc.)
5. Who creates resources (teachers, students, etc.)

The key categories of issues included:

1. Cultural
2. Pedagogic
3. Organisational issues and information management
4. Users' skills and motivation
5. Technological

For further details see the Resource Pack, Appendix2-littlejohn-margaryan.ppt and Appendix3-GenericIssues.doc files.

Firstly, the participants were asked to individually list the issues impacting the use of LORs (based on their experience), then to discuss these in break-out groups and map the issues onto the community dimensions outlined earlier. To capture the issues, the individual participants were provided with templates, and the groups were asked to capture the results of their discussions on flipcharts.

This was followed by the second task, where the participants were requested to identify potential or tested solutions to these issues (individually, using templates), then in groups map the solutions onto the issues (again using flipcharts to capture the results). A plenary discussion followed where the participants shared experiences and perspectives on the solutions to the issues as well as prioritised the proposed solutions (the discussion was captured by the facilitator).

The day concluded with an evaluation of the workshop (for a summary of participants' comments see Appendix4-EvaluationSummary.doc).

The collected data was analysed by the project team using qualitative data analysis techniques such as open coding followed by generation of core categories of issues and solutions (3 iterative cycles) and mapping of the core categories of issues and solutions onto the five community dimensions. Since the workshop was aimed at initial exploration of the issues involved, the analysis at this stage does not involve further integration of the categories beyond the descriptive level. This will be done in the final report on the LO repository models and practices, which will synthesise the outputs from the literature review and the workshop (will be circulated in March 2006).

Outcomes

The core categories of issues (per community dimension) identified by the participants are summarised in Table 1:

Table 1. Core categories of issues per community dimension, participants' perspective

Community dimensions/subdimensions	Core categories of issues
1. Geographic range	
1.1. Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture clash • Lack of institutional strategy • Connection with institutional VLE • History of ICT use
1.2. National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture clash • Critical mass • Connection with institutional repository • Managing multiple partners
1.3. International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture clash • IPR
1.4. Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of purpose • Sustainability • Connections with existing VLEs
2. Educational sector	
2.1. Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on teaching vs. learning • Focus on content delivery • Non-standard curriculum • Teaching culture (lack of sharing) • Technology (lack of)
2.2. Further Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture (lack of sharing)
2.3. School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture (lack of sharing)
3. Disciplinary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Teaching style diversity • Specific types of resources • Diversity of CoPs within disciplines • Different user IT skills

4. Who creates resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture of sharing (lack of) • Motivation • Ownership • Authenticity and quality of student-created resources • Common language • IPR (understanding of) • Users' skills in info management
5. Types of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of resources • Metadata

Additionally, a set of issues were identified that were not specific to any community dimension but were rather generic to the use of LORs. These generic issues are listed below:

1. Purpose (LORs driven externally rather than by users' needs)
2. Technology (e.g. simplicity, usability, speed of access, scalability, authentication, human aspects)
3. Rights (IPR, DRM)
4. Metadata
5. Organisational culture (competition vs. collaboration, no trust in others' work, focus on RAE rather than learning, different language/terminology among LORs' stakeholders)
6. Resources (e.g. staff workload, long-term management of repositories)
7. Quality control of the LO resources
8. User motivation/incentives
9. User skills/literacy

In addition, the workshop participants proposed solutions to some of the issues. These are summarised in Table 2:

Table 2. Solutions for some core categories of issues, participants' perspective

Community dimensions/subdimensions	Core categories of issues	Solutions
1. Geographic range		
1.1. Institutional	Connection with institutional VLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring educational usability • Improvement of technical and human interoperability • Training for institutional change
1.2. National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture clash • Critical mass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different interfaces for different user groups • Starter packs • Early users commit to uploading resources upfront • Making it easy to move objects between LORs • Provide federated search
1.3. International	IPR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear policy • Systematic procedures • Standard license
2. Educational sector		

2.1. Higher Education	Teaching culture (lack of sharing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearer copyright • Simple rules/guidelines • Incentives • Specified in employment contracts • Identify and work with early adopters
3. Disciplinary	Diversity of CoPs within disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't fight it-offer flexibility • Don't fight it – focus on disciplines willing to contribute
	Generic issues	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose (LORs driven externally rather than by users' needs) • Staff workload • User motivation • User skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop solutions based on users' practice • Create added value • Employ dedicated staff • Evaluate workload and develop workflows to support • Academic recognition • Bonus for staff/funding for department • Created added value for sharing • Users/staff have to recognise this as a problem

The final task involved each group prioritising two of the number of identified solutions. The following solutions were prioritised:

1. Standardised IPR licences
2. Academic recognition
3. Incentives, particularly creating added value for uploading/sharing resources
4. Developing solutions based on users' current practice
5. IPR – systematic approach

Based on the analysis of the data, the project team mapped the key categories of issues and solutions onto the LOR community dimensions. The map is enclosed (see the Resource Pack, Appendix5-mapping-dimensions-issues-solutions.doc). A separate map of generic issues and solutions was developed as well (Resource Pack, Appendix6-Map-GenericIssues-Solutions.rtf).

Conclusions and the next steps

The workshop was held in order to elicit input from the CD-LOR Associate and Collaborative Partners on the initial linking of types of learning communities coalescing around the LORs with barriers and potential solutions for uptake and use of LORs. Overall, the outcomes supported the findings of the literature review, particularly in terms of the current issues involved in uptake and use of LORs. The initial community dimensions framework was helpful in differentiating between the issues, although some participants felt that the framework was difficult to use for mapping these. Also, it was proposed to extend the initial typology by adding regional LOR communities as part of the "geographic range" dimension. In addition to

issues (and solutions) specific to different types of LOR communities, a set of generic issues was identified.

Further steps will involve:

- 1) Integrating the outcomes of the workshop with the literature review findings to produce a final report on current types of LOR communities and barriers and enablers to uptake and use of LORs. The report will be shared with the CDLOR stakeholders as well as the wider community.
- 2) Developing use cases and identifying/prioritising solutions to barriers. This step too will be carried out in consultation with the CDLOR Associate and Collaborative Partners and the wider community.

Appendices:

Appendix 1. CDLOR Project overview (file Appendix1-carrier.ppt)

Appendix 2. LORs in support of learning: Dimensions and issues (file Appendix2-littlejohn-margaryan.ppt)

Appendix 3. Generic issues in using LORs (file Appendix3-GenericIssues.doc)

Appendix 4. Workshop evaluation, participants' comments (file Appendix4-EvaluationSummary.doc)

Appendix 5. Map of dimensions, issues and solutions (file Appendix5-mapping-dimensions-issues-solutions.doc)

Appendix 6. Map of generic issues and solutions (file Appendix6-Map-GenericIssues-Solutions.rtf)