White Rose OER UX

An analysis of the interviews

In April 2022 the OER project group conducted the second round of interviews with academics across different departments from the University of Leeds and Sheffield to gain insight into how they create their reading lists, find materials for inclusion, specifically exploring the accessibility of OERs and their inclusion on those lists. This document analyses the comments from the interviews.

Number of comments

Of the 4 interviewees that participated we were able to gather 97 comments. 10 comments were discounted as they were not relevant to the project.

Thematic analysis

Each comment was given a theme to describe its general content. These themes were generated from a predetermined list taken from the previous UX interviews with some new ones added if needed. The charts below shows the frequency of each theme.
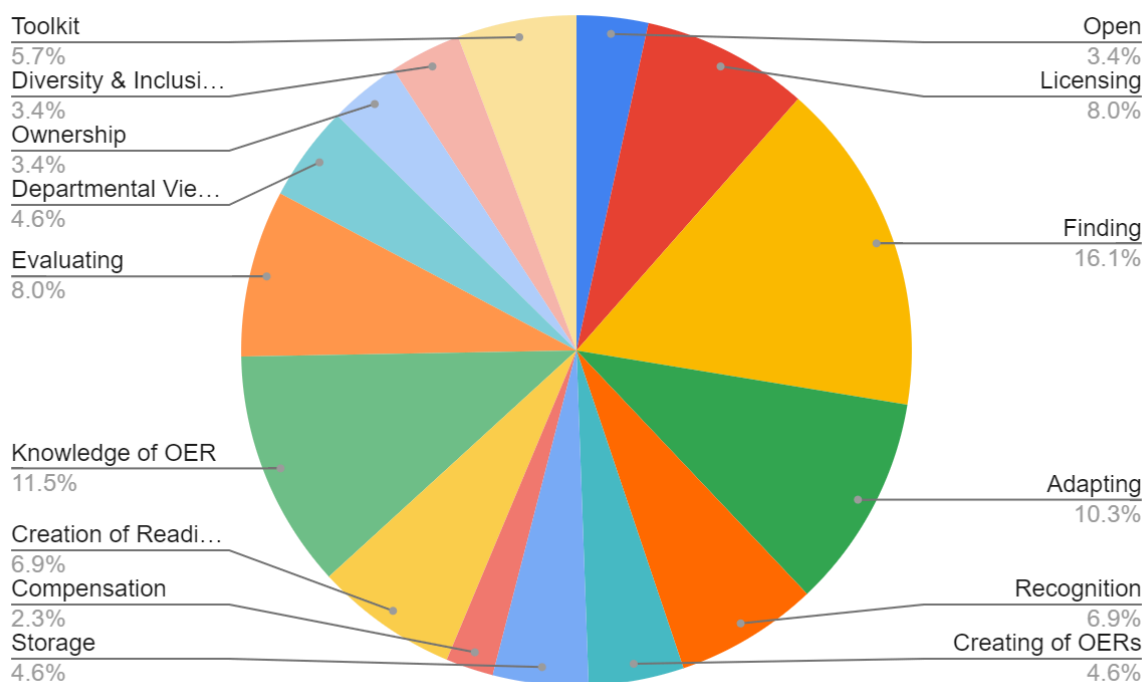

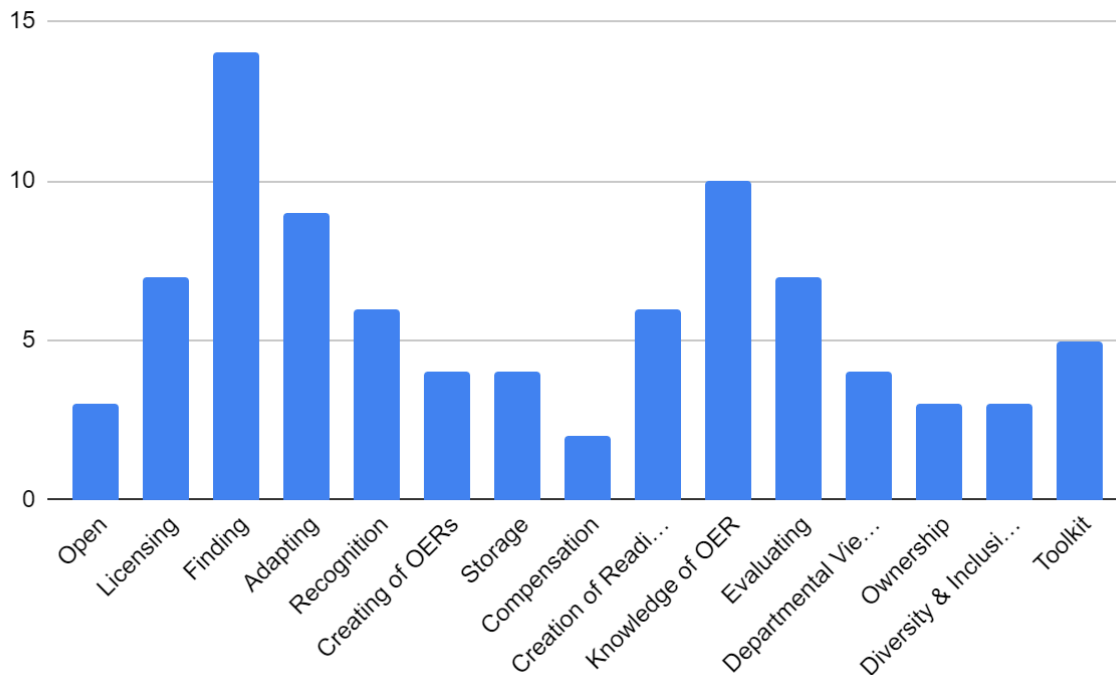*Figure 1: a pie chart showing breakdown of themes from the UX interviews*

Figure 2: a bar chart showing frequency of themes from the UX interviews

Creation of Reading Lists

There tends to be a lot of juggling between research, teaching and managing workloads but the best time to assess the materials on reading lists is when they are updating modules.

We tend to talk about textbooks but participants raised that reading lists includes quite a lot of different complex sets of material, e.g. lecture slides, problems and solutions, exam questions and solutions, notes and interactive diagrams.

Knowledge of OERs

Most of the participants had no prior knowledge of OERs or the creation of them. Some knew about OA material but didn't know what the difference was between the two. Another participant mentioned that their knowledge of OERs was 'sketchy'.

One participant stated that they had learnt about OERs by attending the Sheffield OER event. This has prompted them to speak to the course lead to take a look at open textbooks and raise awareness of what they can offer. They took the view that 'OERs could be an opportunity? Publishers are catching up, but a chance to get a different perspective to materials, different inflections to traditional content'. It allows for more variety than just what our publishers offer.

Finding

The most common theme of this round of UX interviews, with 14 comments, was around the 'finding' of OER material

One of the main concerns was finding the time to look for resources to use. Very often a lot of time is spent searching for material but the quality is lacking or they simply can't find suitable texts to use. There is a lack of central places to browse and material can very often be kept on personal web pages making discoverability tricky. Academics in senior positions are able to focus their time more for the purpose of searching. Clear signposting about where the OERs are and what you can do with them is clearly a desirable feature.

The other concern is around coverage and quality of content. A specific example given was of an animation that was needed to share online. The participant could only find something extremely basic and not very engaging. The terminology of the animation was also not suitable, e.g. the video mentioned Cancer but the course was Neuroscience. The participant stated that 'sometimes it's easier and quicker to create your own'.

A number of academics stated that textbooks are often recommended by colleagues and this is likely the fastest route to finding something suitable. When good content was found, or created, this was shared with others decreasing the duplication of work.

It was also stated that there is a dislike for being told "you must use something from Nature Reviews" and publishing in high ranking journals.

Evaluating

The time element for review and evaluation regarding OER take-up was mentioned, however there was a recognition that once that initial time was invested, it subsequently became easier for future usage.

Participants would always review the material rather than select from just the title. When they are already teaching the material and they're knowledgeable in that area, it does make it easier to assess quality but It's more difficult if it's a topic you're not familiar with.

If there was a bank of resource material that could be shared, academics would be able to see quite easily if the content and quality was suitable for the course.

Creation of OERs

The main thread that came out of this topic was the time that academics have to create OERs. There was some suggestion that more senior academics may have more time but those in early career positions less so.

Most believe that it would create a good reputation for Universities to create OERs and they would be happy to share their material for use as long as there are no IP issues.

Adapting

Participants were generally happy about adapting others' work but only one was aware of anyone doing this with their work but under CC licensing people do not need to inform you if they have reused your work. The option of taking content from several sources and packaging it together is particularly useful.

When adapting work it's likely they would look at who has written it before adapting. There was also an acknowledgement that some people might start their careers authoring an OER and won't have a track record.

An issue that was raised was that a lot of material can be inherited when taking on a course and there may be an 'intellectual debt' to the person who originally developed it. This would lead to ambiguity as to whether you have the right to publish openly if you wanted to.

Licensing

The main comment around licensing was the need to make sure that all open material had a Creative Commons licence and more guidance around this would be welcomed. They also recognised that this was a concern for students.

Diversity & Inclusivity

There should definitely be a question raised about how robust and representative the material is. Content, subject matter and the ways in which things are taught should be considered along with learning styles, materials and encouraging a safe learning space.

Recognition and Compensation

There were mixed views around recognition with some participants stating that formal recognition was not required whilst others found it valuable that recognition would highlight the effort and create a sense of value for creating OERs. One participant believed that it would encourage a broader community culture.

Financial compensation would also be a driving factor for some participants.

Common questions around this were how would you get recognition and where does the recognition come from? There was also a concern that the University would keep and use their lecture recordings/course books they had prepared without any clear acknowledgement.

Ownership

The main factor that came into play around this theme was who owns what? There are a lot of questions around Universities holding onto IP once they leave.

If items are put in Creative Commons spaces it should be expected that they will be seen, used and adapted. It is very much in conflict with how you think about your research and people are territorial over the things they produce in other academic areas.

Open

One academic stated that he made all his material available freely online for courses he had stopped teaching but didn't do this for current courses as it was a hassle. All the material he has made open was originally on the university website, but he has recently moved this onto commercial servers. Not everything needs to be openly available, but key elements of the course should be, e.g. textbook type material that students can retain access to after graduation.

Storage

There is no awareness of any official policies regarding storage but the academics we interviewed are storing materials on Blackboard so it is locked away. There does need to be some thought about how to distribute and share material when it is not just a single file.

Departmental Views and Policies

Each University should have their own University level policy that departments can work within. It can then be referred to in order to get more buy-in and support.

Policy content in the form of guidance from the University would be helpful including things to double check and watch out for. A checklist would be useful for things to check prior to making something openly available.

Toolkit

The toolkit needs to be visible and simple. A key flowchart, something that won't take up too much time to read.

We're making it difficult for people when we just direct them to a web page. It would be preferable to have a simple message, e.g. 3 or 4 principles, rather than a web page containing masses of information.

Recommendations

1. How do we share, distribute and store OER materials? Possibly add content on the guide to inform this.
2. There should be an OER policy for all institutions.
3. Possibly a quick guide on the front page of the toolkit highlighting some key principles.

UX Round 3 Ideas

1. Send out toolkit and get users to do cognitive map for website.