Welcome to Creative Commons:

An Articulate Storyline Course for Educators

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Global collaboration for the benefit of education is being fostered through the Open

Educational Resources (OER) movement. The term OER was coined in the early 2000s, and

"describes electronic learning and teaching materials, which have clearly identifiable licensing

arrangements, making it easier to know how you can use them in your own teaching" (Hardy,

2010, p. 138). Some of the most prevalent licenses available for OER are with the nonprofit

organization Creative Commons (CC). Casey (2012) explains that the CC licensing system was

envisioned as a way to offer a "shared common space on the web where people could publish

their works under simple, easily understood license terms in a way that helps them take

advantage of the networking properties of web technologies" (p. 34). For this common space's

potential to be fully realized, however, it is essential for it to be known and utilized. Plotkin

(2010) states that the "long-term prospect of viability for the OER movement remains where it

has always been: firmly in the hands of the education community itself" (p. 31). Therefore, in

order to support and grow the OER movement, it is important to spread awareness of it among

educators through professional development means (e.g., an Articulate Storyline course) by

sharing with them information on specific resources and licenses available, especially through

Creative Commons.

Creative Commons Course

As a way to help familiarize educators with Creative Commons, I created and

introductory instructional unit, "Welcome to Creative Commons", explaining what CC licensing

is and how it can be used. I chose the Articulate Storyline software as the tool to create this

unit/course because of its easy-to-use and interactive multimedia presentation format. Since this

course is created through Articulate Storyline, it will be able to be distributed via email, CD, and/or the Web. With HTML5, courses are also viewable on most mobile devices.

Audience

This introductory course is geared toward a wide audience of educators in differing levels and fields of discipline. As the term "commons" suggests, it is created for all.

       Levels. Not only is the course for educators from elementary school teachers to university professors, but it can be beneficial for school administrators as well. The importance of targeting this audience in regard to the Open Education Resources movement is supported by Dr. Martha Kanter, a chancellor of a community college whose board of trustees passed a policy supporting the use of OER. Speaking of a survey they distributed, Kanter states: "We learned that faculty were very interested in understanding the growing field of OER and how they could appropriately use it for teaching and learning" (as cited in Plotkin, 2010, p. 24). Kanter further holds that the "starting point is the faculty, supported by excited, web-enabled deans and vice presidents," and advises that "[y]ou really have to engage your faculty and find ways to get the OER discussion started" (as cited in Plotkin, 2010, p. 24). One important initial topic of discussion is Creative Commons. Plotkin (2010) lists "What is Creative Commons?" as one of the frequently asked questions developed in order to address faculty questions and concerns about OER at Kanter's community college.

       Disciplines. The course's audience also covers educators from a variety of disciplines, as all subject areas can benefit from CC licensed materials, from health and science to music and art (Hardy, 2010; Roland, 2010; Thibeault, 2011). Plotkin (2010) agrees and goes further by advising that "[t]o achieve widespread adoption, OER materials must continue becoming more useful in a greater variety of educational contexts" (p. 18). One of the course slides is dedicated to sharing educational CC projects that address multiple disciplines.

About the Course

"Welcome to Creative Commons" was designed to be user-friendly, to foster meaningful learning, and to cover key topics about Creative Commons to inform and inspire the educators/learners.

Design. Throughout the course slides, learners are guided by the onscreen pedagogical agent, Professor C. Cee, who gives information concerning Creative Commons and directs the learners to where, when, and why to click on onscreen. To begin the course, learners enter Professor C. Cee's office where she introduces the course, including its three main sections: About, Licenses, and Education. From there, learners move through each section's material (a combination of text, audio, and video), and then check their knowledge with a short assessment at the end of each section. Like Manning and Johnson (2012) suggest, I supplemented the slides that contained audio and/or video with a text transcript to help accommodate for learners with different learning needs/preferences.

Topics. The first section covers basic information about the Creative Commons organization, including history, mission, and vision. The next section goes into more detail about the licenses that CC offers, introducing the license icons and what each license entails (i.e., Attribution, ShareAlike, NoDerivs, and NonCommercial). It also explains how CC works alongside, not separate from Copyright, which Casey (2012) sees as an important issue to discuss since Creative Commons has "become part of the mainstream web, legal and social environment that we all now inhabit" (p. 36). The final section focuses on the educational value of CC, sharing projects and resources of interest to educators.

Integration of the Course

Roland (2010) believes that to prepare educators to teach effectively "in a technologically-rich environment, we need to incorporate the best digital tools and practices available today during

their professional training, so they will be better equipped to innovate for tomorrow" (p. 23).

Two options for integrating this course into professional training are for educators to explore it either in a group setting, such as a professional development (PD) session, or asynchronously on their own time. Either way, it is suggested to be accompanied by more information on the OER movement in general, how it currently is or is not being utilized in the said institution, and the institutions' vision for its use in the future. If OER is an unfamiliar topic and/or the educators would benefit from having technical assistance while learning, a group PD would be the best option. It can be led by a presenter from outside the institution or by someone at the institution who is already knowledgeable and motivated to share about OER. Plotkin (2010) agrees: "You will find faculty leaders right away. Let them loose to share what they know" (p. 24). Whether in a PD or on their own, educators should follow-up the "Welcome to Creative Commons" course with exploration of the CC website to delve deeper into topics/projects introduced, look up case studies in their discipline of study, search for CC licensed materials of interest to them, and/or begin licensing their own materials. To fully utilize OER and CC effectively in the institution, more than one course/PD will be necessary. It is advised to continue to support educators' to "have the conversations, review the draft policies and procedures, share OER sites and curriculum, attend conferences and engage in OER professional development through sabbaticals, growth awards and other available resources" (Plotkin, 2010, p. 24).

Conclusion

Whether OER is already prevalent at a particular institution or not, it is a current global movement with the potential to revolutionize what we know of education, and educators should at least be aware of, even if not active participants in, this movement. Kanter explains the importance of this: "OER is clearly an area of great faculty interest and excitement. It's about what is happening in their classrooms, in their courses, with their students" (as cited in Plotkin,

2010, pp. 24-25). The purpose of education is the growth of the students, and incorporating OER into instruction will expand their opportunities for learning. Marshall Smith of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching states: "The dramatic expansion of OER has created great new opportunities for improving teaching and learning. By providing access for all and contributing to a global commons, OER holds the promise of equalizing the opportunity for learning across the globe" (Plotkin, 2010, p. 5). Creative Commons is a significant part of OER, allowing individuals to share their work freely through licensing, and it is my intention for this Articulate Storyline course to help spread awareness of the possibility for educators to collaborate around the world to improve student learning.

References

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