Phil Johnson and Craig Hammond utilised [www.dropbox.com](http://www.dropbox.com) as a research facility, aimed at engaging two groups of students in OER-related ‘cascade’ activities:

As part of this process, we e-mailed out the following (activity 3) ‘invitation’ to the two student researcher groups:



As students accepted this task, downloaded dropbox, and then accessed the shared folder, they each accessed their specific (named) word document, and undertook the OER-related research activities identified (see example document below). A total of 19 students were invited to complete the activity, 14 students accessed their documents in the shared folder, and 7 successfully completed the tasks.

The Open Educational Resources (OER's) movement has received major backing from governments in both the UK and USA and has the potential to do to the education industry what the web 2.0 has done to other information industries such as news, music and publishing (e.g. think of Twitter and Wiki Leaks, Limewire etc.); i.e. create significant and increasing opportunities for public and democratic engagement and interaction.

Education will have to increasingly confront (and utilise) these changes; this is the reason why institutions such as [Harvard](http://www.extension.harvard.edu/openlearning), [Stanford](http://itunes.stanford.edu/), [MIT](http://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm) and [Oxford](http://openspires.oucs.ox.ac.uk/) (for example) are now producing [OER](http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/nov/10/web-technology-degree-future-online) materials (and allowing general public access).

OERs also offer new opportunities for organisations to [collaborate](http://www.jorum.ac.uk/), and provide multi-disciplinary approaches as part of their studies and educational provision.

The OER field is evolving and it is therefore prudent for us to engage with it now, so that we, as students and educational practitioners can be prepared to meet the immediate and future changes in H.E.

Your/our research activities are part of Phase 2 of a JISC/C-SAP funded research project – known as the ‘OER2 Cascade’ element, (i.e. the processes and effectiveness of students and academic staff accessing and distributing OER materials – and their current and impending ‘impact’).

The final part of our research activity, invites you to access the following OER resources, and to provide Phil and I with detailed feedback, on how you found:

***(Write student-researcher name here)* Task 1:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| OER resources on how to create:(**Click into**): [Contents pages](http://vimeo.com/22598256) **\***(**Click into**): [Referencing](http://vimeo.com/22597955) **\***In Word 2007 | **Please provide your responses to the four questions in the boxes below:** |
| 1. How useful/accessible did you find the presentation of the information in these resources?
 |  |
| 1. Explain the likelihood of you using this/similar resource(s) as part of your future studies (i.e. in assignments, presentations etc.).
 |  |
| 1. Would you recommend the use of these OER resources to other students/learners? Please explain your answer.
 |  |
| 1. What could be ‘improved’ (if anything) in order for you to use/recommend these OER resources as part of future studies?
 |  |

**\*** This activity consists of a ‘Voicethread/Jing-styled’ OER resource (which was then uploaded to [www.vimeo.com](http://www.vimeo.com)), where a UCBC lecturer explains and visualises how to create a contents page, and how to reference using Word 2007.

***(Write student-researcher name here)* Task 2:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| OER resources on how to create:(**Click into**): [French Revolution](http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=397093) \*\*In Word 2007 | **Please provide your responses to the four questions in the boxes below:** |
| This is a large document – only access and comment on **section 1** AND **section 7.2**.  | Pay particular attention to this important ‘symbol’ (at the bottom of each page in this resource) It is important where the usage and citing of this OER is concerned (click onto the image):CC BY NC SA.PNG |
| 1. How useful/accessible did you find the presentation of the information in these resources?
 |  |
| 1. Explain the likelihood of you using this/similar resource(s) as part of your future studies (i.e. in assignments, presentations etc.).
 |  |
| 1. Would you recommend the use of these OER resources to other students/learners? Please explain your answer.
 |  |
| 1. What could be ‘improved’ (if anything) in order for you to use/recommend these OER resources as part of future studies?
 |  |

**\*\*** This OER-resource is an Open Learning resource (provided by the Open University), which, usefully, also cites the Creative Commons Licence.

Collation of ‘selected’ student feedback points **(Task 1)**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| OER resources on how to create:(**Click into**): [Contents pages](http://vimeo.com/22598256)(**Click into**): [Referencing](http://vimeo.com/22597955)In Word 2007 | **Please provide your responses to the four questions in the boxes below:** |
| 1. How useful/accessible did you find the presentation of the information in these resources?
 | The information was useful ... The commentary was a little quiet possibly, but the visuals were very clear (Adam Holden)At one point the tutor mentioned putting the video on pause and trying it ourselves, and from personal experience I would probably have to do that ... (Emma Fort)Easily accessible and extremely useful, particularly if students are embarking on their initial assignments and need guidance ... (Emma Sumner)I think anyone could learn from these resources as the information is presented in a very clear and simple manner. (Maggie Smith)The information was also very accessible as you could watch the video and pause/rewind at any time. On the right hand side you could also refer back or look at other videos which are also relevant. (Nicola Shearns)I found them useful as some of the information I didn’t know and the video’s are in an easy to follow format that you can re-watch if needed. Also, the parts I already knew were a result of being shown in university and so this way I could learn the same information at home in my own time. They are accessible and easy to follow. (Ruth Hudson) |
| 1. Explain the likelihood of you using this/similar resource(s) as part of your future studies (i.e. in assignments, presentations etc.).
 | I would use something like this very regularly; I have often used YouTube for similar hints and tips. (Adam Holden)... I would love to have all our lectures recorded so I could listen to them over and over until the information went in and stayed there. (Emma Fort)It has demonstrated straightforward short cuts which are extremely useful towards saving time when writing assignments. (Emma Sumner)It is very likely that I will refer back to this resource or something similar when I do my dissertation. (Maggie Smith)The likelihood of using this in my future studies in very high, as it would save me time in the long run ... (Nicola Shearns)I would use these resources for other things in my studies. I think they are really helpful, and I especially like how I can access them so easily at home and watch as many times as I needed to ... Moreover, I would use them as it gives me the opportunity to pick my learning environment to ensure I get the most of the information, unlike in a classroom where I am less likely to learn it. (Ruth Hudson) |
| 1. Would you recommend the use of these OER resources to other students/learners? Please explain your answer.
 | Yes I think I would ... This video was concise and helpful and slowly explained ... (Adam Holden)Yes definitely, as previously mentioned, it is very good when you need a point repeating, maybe to jog your memory at assignment time. (Emma Fort)Absolutely! They are easily accessible, short and straightforward demonstrations which can save people time ... (Emma Sumner)... if you forget something you can go over It in your own time and at your own pace. (Maggie Smith)Yes I would, as some people don’t always get what your explaining first time, and may feel daft asking again. (Nicola Shearns)Yes I would. Visual help is better than written instructions. (Nicola Wilson)... making the move from college to university can be daunting, but easy to follow videos that explain everything so clearly would be great. (Ruth Hudson) |
| 1. What could be ‘improved’ (if anything) in order for you to use/recommend these OER resources as part of future studies?
 | I would maybe have the volume of the video a little louder ... (Adam Holden)... shorter videos may keep the students more interested ... (Emma Fort)I do not think anything could be improved. (Emma Sumner)I think these specific resources are straightforward and go straight to the point so I don’t feel like they could be improved in any way ... (Maggie Smith)Higher level of sound as I had it at 100% and still could not hear it that well. (Nicola Shearns)The only thing is for people that are savvier with a computer they are a little slow moving. Like I mentioned I knew some of the information but not all of it and found some of the videos a bit tedious. I’m not sure what could be done about this. (Ruth Hudson) |

Collation of selected student feedback points **(Task 2)**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| OER resources on how to create:(**Click into**): [French Revolution](http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=397093)In Word 2007 | **Please provide your responses to the four questions in the boxes below:** |
| This is a large document – only access and comment on **section 1** AND **section 7.2**.  | Pay particular attention to this important ‘symbol’ (at the bottom of each page in this resource) It is important where the usage and citing of this OER is concerned (click onto the image):CC BY NC SA.PNG |
| 1. How useful/accessible did you find the presentation of the information in these resources?
 | I don’t really ... enjoy reading content similar to this as I often lose which line I am on ... I often print out resources to read ... to ensure things are not missed. (Adam Holden)These types of documents I find only useful for skimming through and finding the odd reference. It’s very hard for me as a student to learn from reading to myself as I tend to go off track and stop thinking about what I supposed to be learning. (Emma Fort)Easily accessible and interesting to read, useful in how it explains ... The French Revolution ... straightforward to read, being academic but not overly so that it would put the reader off. (Emma Sumner)... it was easy to navigate it. This particular text is full of references, which is very useful and can be used for further research (Maggie Smith)The information was useful, and the use of pictures / quotes / italic writing made the text easier to read, as it broke the text up and kept me interested. (Nicola Shearns)Bit boring but useful. (Nicola Wilson)I found this information easy to access and informative. I preferred section 7.2 to section 1 as it is broken up by bullets and graphs. This is my learning style as a big page of writing, especially on a computer is hard for me to focus on. I did find it useful, for me I would prefer to see it in hard copy version but could easily do this myself. (Ruth Hudson) |
| 1. Explain the likelihood of you using this/similar resource(s) as part of your future studies (i.e. in assignments, presentations etc.).
 | I’m not sure I would read things like this ... (Adam Holden)I’d say it’s highly unlikely that I would use this type of source to try and teach myself any new skills but I may use it to extract the odd reference from. (Emma Fort)... a great introduction to researching information for new learners who may struggle to access the correct information. (Emma Sumner)It is very likely that I would use similar resources in my studies (Maggie Smith)The likelihood of using a similar resource in a future assignment would be quite high as there is a lot of information given and you would be able to reference it. However it would take up a lot of time to read which could potentially put people off! (Nicola Shearns)I would use information like this. I think it’s often hard to find good, reliable information online, but resources that are trusted like this is accessible thanks to the creative commons attribution are great ... It would allow students to access the information easily. (Ruth Hudson) |
| 1. Would you recommend the use of these OER resources to other students/learners? Please explain your answer.
 | Possibly, concise, but much like reading a textbook, the information of the textbook is only as good as its layout and digestion. (Adam Holden)I would recommend this type of learning to students but as a side line to the other type of learning (the video’s) ... (Emma Fort)Yes because once again they save time, are genuine and give clear, concise information about the topics. It is a good habit to develop in using these resources and I think it is important to encourage others to do the same. (Emma Sumner)Yes I would recommend them because they are a useful source of information which is clearly laid out and easy to use (Maggie Smith)Yes I would as the information needed is provided and it would save time for doing research, therefore giving more time on the content of the assignment. (Nicola Shearns)Yes. I think these are invaluable to students. Although the format is hard for me to read, it would not be for most students. (Ruth Hudson) |
| 1. What could be ‘improved’ (if anything) in order for you to use/recommend these OER resources as part of future studies?
 | Verbalising of the material could potentially be better, making it easier to make your own notes. (Adam Holden)If the whole document had the option to have the writing in audio whilst you read along this may be a little more helpful, however I’m aware this would be very time consuming to put together. (Emma Fort)I do not think anything could be improved. (Emma Sumner)I can’t see however room for improvement with the resource in question. (Maggie Smith)Break the text up a bit more – as otherwise you could look at it and be put off straight away by the sheer amount of words! (Nicola Shearns)Section 1 could be better if it was also broken up more but I think they are an invaluable resource. (Ruth Hudson) |

**Brief summary of findings:**

* It appears that the accessibility, visuality, and availability of the ‘Task 1’ OER-resources are preferred over the ‘standard text’ (Task 2) OER open resources.
* The audio quality of the Task 1 resource would need to be considered.
* Students clearly identified the ‘recognition’ (and necessity) of different learning styles and learning environments – the ‘physicality of attending a lecture’ in the University setting is not necessarily conducive with effective or bespoke learning.
* The Creative Commons licensing of the Task 2 resource appealed to students.
* The quality and the differentiated sections associated with the Task 2 OER resource also positively acknowledged by students.
* It would appear reasonable to assume that as more ‘quality’ OER resources, (such as these), become increasingly available for (our) students, they would indeed utilise them and cascade them to fellow-learners.