Jorum Repository Case Study: Business Models and IPR Arrangements for Adopting an Open Access Service

Author: John Casey
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1 Introduction

This short case study describes some of the thinking and analysis involved in behind changing the business model and IPR arrangements for a learning object repository in order to adopt an Open Access service. The stress is on clarity of purpose, understanding our business and long term sustainability – it will be interesting to see what parallels there are with the OR research community.

2 Understanding Our Business

This document briefly describes the ideas behind the introduction of a new IPR and licence regime that can support the long-term operation of a national UK digital repository service for sharing teaching and learning materials to support the educational community. The priorities of the service are to be user-centred, to be free at the point of access, to be quick and easy to use, to have minimal legal and technical barriers for access to the service and use of the materials.

In any area of activity in the digital media business (which Jorum is a part of) the IPR and licence regime is usually an expression of the underlying business model and meant to support it and not hinder it. The business proposition for e-learning in the UK public education sector is currently not a well understood (HEFCE, 2006). A sure sign of this immaturity is the chaotic and contradictory state of public and institutional policy and practice regarding the commissioning and management of teaching and learning materials (JISC, 2008).

A JISC sponsored project (TrustDR, 2007) investigated practical solutions to managing the IPR in teaching and learning materials created within institutions. The TrustDR project proposed that to do this it was necessary to:

- Understand the business
- Know where the value is

Following this sensible advice leads to the conclusion that teaching is the business and that this is in fact the single largest source of institutional income in FE & HE. As a core business activity it is surprisingly neglected and underdeveloped in our institutions. It is also recognised by the state authorities that this core business needs to be regulated and improved by external bodies such as the QAA (for HE) and the HMI and SQA (for FE). If we want to know where the value is we might follow the advice of some recognised leaders and experts in the field of education such Paul Ramsden (1992), John Biggs (2006) and Diana Laurillard (2002) – who are also in their different ways influential members of the educational establishment. Their approach to teaching lays great stress on the ‘process’ involved rather than the mere delivery of content.
Paul Ramsden – the director of the UK Higher Education Academy, the body in charge of improving teaching and learning in HE – expresses this approach in his often referenced ‘3 models of HE teaching’. This states that good teaching has to include 3 different components that build upon each other:

1. The delivery of content and information
2. The organisation of student activities
3. The actions of a reflective teacher

Ramsden points out that much traditional teaching never progresses beyond the first level – which is the lowest form of education. Equally, a philosophy of e-learning, which is concentrating on content delivery and technical factors, represents an impoverished educational approach.

Looked at from this perspective we can get a better understanding of the importance of content in teaching and learning and also of its value. As far as cash value goes there is little evidence to suggest that such materials would command a ready commercial market (JISC, 2008). From this point of view content is important but only as one component in an overall process and what is important is facilitating that process. One of the best ways of doing this is supporting the development of teachers and their institutions to be more reflective about what they do. An essential way of doing this is by sharing and reflecting on practice and this can be facilitated by the sharing of teaching and learning materials.

In this view the real value in sharing teaching and learning materials is what the teacher does with them and what they learn about their own practice and that of others through the act of sharing.

3 Learning the Lessons from the Experience of Jorum1

The original Jorum1 service has provided a valuable learning experience in both the practicalities and the educational aspects of sharing digital learning and teaching resources in the HE/FE sectors in the UK. During this time we have learnt a lot and we intend to take these lessons forward in the new developments of Jorum2:

- There is a need for clarity of purpose to support the sharing of learning and teaching resources
- This clarity of purpose needs to be supported by an IPR and licence regime that enables the aims of the service and does not hinder it
- There are many good reasons for sharing teaching and learning resources including:
  - Supporting the development of reflective teachers
  - Freeing up time to concentrate on teaching rather than on the development and delivery of content
  - Developing skills for teachers:
• Media literacy
• Information management
• Flexible learning course design
  o Contributing to teaching communities of practice
  o Reducing the time and effort involved in finding learning materials
  o Simplifying the otherwise time consuming copyright clearance process for using other peoples resources
  o Supporting the development of reflective teaching institutions
• The technical features of the service are important but the educational aspects and benefits of sharing resources should be the determining factors for the future development of the service
• The recognition that the real value in sharing resources in this way is the degree to which it may support improvements in the processes of teaching and learning in our institutions – the provision of content, while important, is secondary to these processes and does not replace them
• The current high levels of confusion about IPR amongst staff at all levels combined with an underdeveloped policy environment for IPR in the education sector needs to be met with a very clear response by a service like Jorum
• The original Jorum service had very high transaction costs in terms of licence agreement conditions, expiry and renewal clauses, archival commitments etc. To be sustainable in the long term the new Jorum service licence and IPR regimes need to be simple, clear and low maintenance.
• Access, Authorisation and Authentication (AAA) measures (in both the technical and the policy dimensions) need to be kept as simple as possible to ensure long-term sustainability and a robust service delivery that can cope with changes to the policy and technical landscape
• The inclusion of commercial third party content in the new Jorum services is to be avoided because of their likely demand for more complicated AAA measures and impractical DRM technologies. Such content should, in general, be kept to the separate distribution channels and digital supply chains operated by the commercial organisations themselves – a task for which they are best fitted
• The provision of the Jorum services should be seen as a part of the UK and global public realm where the aim is to support those involved in education by the provision of a simple and easy to use means to distribute and share teaching and learning materials in a reliable and long-term manner

4 References

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