EIFL-OA: Open Access

Removing barriers to knowledge

"OPEN ACCESS – OPEN SCIENCE" PROJECT:
A CASE STUDY FROM POLAND

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Results of the EIFL-funded project: "Open Access e-learning course for Polish scientific community" (acronym: OAeL) implemented by Nicolaus Copernicus University and Akademia Gorniczo-Hutnicza University of Science and Technology

INTRODUCTION

The e-learning course "Open Access – Open science" was developed with support from an EIFL-OA Open Access advocacy campaigns grant. The course is the first of its kind in Poland designed as a fully open course which provides Polish students, researchers and librarians with high quality materials for self-learning and re-use. We hope that it will lead the way for more open science projects and programmes in the future.

The project was carried out by open science supporters: librarians, researchers and educators who are early adopters of innovation and who were already engaged in Open Access (OA). It was crucial for effective collaboration to choose a group of practitioners who believes that transparency in science leads to development and innovation.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- An e-learning course "Open Access – Open Science" with nine modules was developed and launched during OA week 2011; over 500 users visited the course page.
- The course platform is very flexible, allowing for easy expansion of existing content and the addition of new content.
- The course was announced broadly through national portals and sites.
- Silesian University of Technology will launch the course for their students in the next academic year at their Moodle LMS.
- Of the feedback that has been received so far, 15 people asked about the course certificates; and 10 people (mainly librarians) reported that they found the course useful.
- The project resulted in the creation of a successful partnership between Nicolaus Copernicus University and Akademia Gorniczo-Hutnicza (AGH) University of Science and Technology.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The overall aim of the project is to strengthen the Polish academic environment with regards to OA and open science. Currently, there are not a lot of researchers in Poland who are informed about the OA movement and its benefits. In addition, there is a common misperception that online publication is of lower

quality than traditional print publication. Many Polish scientific theses are freely available in international OA repositories and there are many Polish OA journals published, however the impact of OA in Poland remains limited.

The goals of this project were to convince researchers to share their research results through open access venues and also to demonstrate the value of OA and how it could be integrated into their research activities work-flow.

In order to address the issue of low awareness of OA in Poland and the lack of professionally prepared teaching resources that can be widely re-used, we designed and developed an open e-learning course. It is based on Moodle LMS and can be re-used with Creative Commons BY-SA license conditions[1]. The course is in Polish and has nine modules. Modules one to four provide an introduction to open access, describe the history of the movement and highlight emerging scholarly communication environment. Modules five to seven provide a detailed overview of open access journals, open access repositories and Open Educational Resources. And finally modules eight and nine describe the best practices of open science projects, approaches and tools.

Currently, the course addresses the fundamentals of OA, but in the future we want to broaden its scope. We want to attract new authors and keep it freely available to the public, so that more people can contribute to it. The course is supervised by the two universities (Nicolaus Copernicus University and Akademia Gorniczo-Hutnicza (AGH) University of Science and Technology) and by Open Education Coalition.

The target audiences for the course are students, researchers and librarians who would like to learn about OA and start sharing their own works in an open way. It can also be used as a teaching resource at universities or vocational schools or for self-learning.

STRATEGIES, TACTIC, AND TOOLS

PARTNERSHIP

The success of the project is due to the outstanding work of the partners involved in the project, each bringing to the project their own areas of expertise. The librarians working at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun are experts in OA and AGH employees are specialists in e-learning design and new media. Both institutions contributed their vast experience, knowledge and contacts with the specialists who designed the course modules. The core group involved in the course development were an effective team. In addition, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and AGH University of Science and Technology created a fully supportive working environment.

PEER-TO-PEER REVIEW

The e-learning course was reviewed by both internal and external reviewers. For the internal review, module authors reviewed each others' modules. The external review process involved people not directly engaged in the course development, including students of library and information science and e-learning specialists from AGH. In both cases the editorial board received useful feedback and the course was revised based on the peer-reviewers recommendations.

ACTIVITIES

The aim of the project was to design a course that was extremely practical rather than providing only theoretical content about OA. Most modules provide the learner with a set of activities for self-learning. Those activities encourage a learner to become active in his/her learning process. We are convinced that using the knowledge in practice increases the level of understanding.

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[1]   http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/pl/deed.en

To give some examples of the approach we chose, below are two sample activities from the course below:

Activity 1.

Using Google Scholar, search for three examples of Polish scientific blogs from three different disciplines. Did you have any problems in your search? If yes, list them and try to reflect on the possible reasons.

Activity 2.

You have already learnt how to check the publisher policy with regards to OA self-archiving. Check if:

- the article published in American Physical Society journals can be deposited in an OA repository. If yes, on what conditions?
- can the article published in the Journal of Avian Biology be available as a postprint in an OA repository?

OA WEEK AND PROMOTION OF THE COURSE IN MEDIA

We launched the e-learning course in October during OA Week 2011, a big event in Poland during which many institutions organised locally hosted conferences, seminars and workshops on OA.

As Coalition for Open Education members, we announced the course through a variety of channels:

- Coalition's blog http://koed.org.pl/2011/10/zaczynamy-open-access-week-2011/
- AGH and Centre of e-Learning webpage http://www.cel.agh.edu.pl/kurs-na-obchody-open-access-week-2011/
- EBIB http://www.nowyebib.info/wiadomosci/archiwum-wiadomoci/704-kurs-e-learningowy-qotwarta-naukaq-jest-ju-gotowy
- FaceBook profile of Coalition for Open Education

SUCCESS STORIES

Over 500 users visited the course page. This is a positive sign that the course has filled in the gap in availability of learning resources which provide an overview as well as comprehensive information about OA. The editorial board keeps receiving positive feedback from the users as well as suggestions for slight modifications/recommendations to add new resources. Currently we do not have information about any cases of re-using this course by university or institution.

LESSONS LEARNED

From our perspective several aspects can be listed that worked well:

- Partnerships – it was important to have effective collaboration and contacts with the specialists who could support and provide external advice.
- Identifying real educational needs of the environment – the project success depends on the knowledge that its outcomes have real possibility to fill the gap in a defined area.

THE FUTURE

The course was planned as part of larger e-learning course which will be developed further within Coalition for Open Education to cover other aspects of openness such as education, software, and culture. Consequently, the added value of this project is that it provided a starting point for creative activities in the area of education and promotion of openness in science and education.

The format of the course makes it easy for new content and new modules to be written by new authors, thereby keeping it up-to-date with rapidly changing scientific communication. We may need to broaden the scope of the course to add new chapters, as innovations are identified. We hope that we will find young scientists willing to write new chapters or to expand existing ones.