

Profile of the open education movement

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A Q&A with Catherine Casserly, Program Officer, Open Educational Resources, Hewlett Foundation Newsletter, November 2007. (Thanks to the [Creative Commons blog](#).) Excerpt:

...Catherine Casserly is a [Hewlett Foundation] program officer who directs the Foundation's work to make educational materials freely available on line. The open educational resources movement, as this effort has come to be known, funds universities and other institutions to make high quality educational materials freely available on the World Wide Web....Casserly has a Ph.D. in the economics of education from Stanford University....

What were the concerns and obstacles when you started?

There was lots of skepticism about the quality of the content. If "open" means free, free must mean of lesser quality. In fact, what we found was that when you put out your materials out there for the world to see, your reputation is on the line and you're going to put out the best quality content that you can....

Aren't copyright laws an obstacle to all of this?

Traditionally, they have been. We're trying to move to "copy left." ...It's a concept of legal constructions that provide much more flexibility so the creator of content still owns it, and those using it must attribute it to them, but the owner can choose the ways they are willing to share it with others....

You know, only a very small number of professors ever make money on textbooks. Everyone thinks they are going to hit, but most don't....We're looking into making these books available for free to those who can't afford them. And there are other models emerging. There's a for-profit company planning to make textbooks available for free and makes its money selling the supplemental materials like flashcards for mobile phones....

So is this movement toward open educational resources now self-sustaining?

It definitely has an incredible amount of momentum, but all the problems are not yet solved. The infrastructure isn't there for it to grow on its own. It still needs support and there's still a lot to learn about its potential. Will it survive? Yes. Will it thrive? It still needs more nurturing. It's clear that it broadens access to learning. But there's still work to be done to show what it can contribute in improving the way learning takes place....