

Open education learning from open access

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Mark Surman, [Learning from open access](#), Commonsense, June 26, 2008. Excerpt:

Yesterday, [Melissa Hagemann](#), [Eve Gray](#) and I led a workshop called [Opening Scholarship](#) at [Elpub 2008](#). Our aim was to dig into a very specific question: what lessons can those of us working on [open education](#) learn from the [open access](#) to research movement. As the room was filled with experienced open access folks (that's the theme of the conference), it seemed like a good place to ask this.

It turned out we were right. There was three hours of fun and intense conversation about both open access and education. At the end, we brainstormed key takeaways with the group:

- 1. Use the 'public access argument'. If public dollars are paying for educational materials, the public should be able to use (and evolve) them freely.*
- 2. Build coalitions. Bringing researchers, universities and taxpayer rights advocates together under the [Alliance for Taxpayer Access](#) banner was critical to the open access NIH victory.*
- 3. Be strategic about where to focus early open education efforts, looking for areas like vocational training where traditional publishers are weak.*
- 4. Engage business and think about business models early on. Open access has worked in part because progressive publishers are involved and because there isn't just one business model.*
- 5. Be patient and explain what you are on about consistently. It's only after years of calm explanations and experimentation that bigger publishers have come to open access.*
- 6. Invest in early test cases that show what is possible. Do research. Develop metrics. Write up the best cases.*
- 7. Build a network of champions and evangelists who can talk about these early successes. And make sure to start building leadership in emerging economies early on....*

Comment. This is a good list. I'd elaborate a bit on #5. It's not just that patient and consistent (and clear and calm) explanations helped encourage some large *publishers* to experiment with OA. They also helped *researchers themselves* to understand it, try it, support it, and spread the word. For OA, the primary beneficiaries were slow to pick up on the idea, not because they were opposed but because they were overworked, preoccupied, misled by myths and disinformation, and pressured by institutional incentives pulling for business as usual. It may be the same with open ed. I'd recommend: make your primary appeals to the primary beneficiaries and the prime movers (people who can bring about the change unilaterally once they are persuaded). For us, luckily, these are the same groups (researchers). For open ed, they may be different groups.