



## Appendix 4: Harper Adams University College Case Study

### 1. Institutional context

Harper Adams' interest in OER has perhaps arisen through recognising the fortunate alignment of key phases of some (top down) contemporary internal initiatives, and the (bottom up) activities of a groundswell of academic learning champions.

- The OpenFields open-access repository was an output from a Harper Adams led HEFCE-funded project (the National Rural Knowledge Exchange), which provided a potential release platform ;
- A contemporary HEFCE(UMF)-funded project (encouraging and streamlining the production and embedding of online learning and assessment materials) provided Harper Adams with some production infrastructure and temporary manpower;
- The determination of a number of pro-active Harper Adams academics to enhance the experience of their learners through experimentation with engaging online learning materials provided potential content, and their openness of attitude and vision for attracting collaborators (by showing and telling) established the ethos.

**Ripple** provided the focus and facilitation, and helped generate the glue that now holds this together.

All our Harper Adams participants indicated (by how they acted or what they said,) that by being connected with fellow visionaries, travellers, enthusiasts, practitioners, mentors and allies, they were to some extent empowered by the scale of that groundswell. This wider community provided them both the affirmation that speculative OER release is worthwhile, and the benefit of information and reflection on the process and its practicalities.

### 2. Objectives

Although small as HE institutions go, Harper Adams is the largest such specialist institution in the UK land-based sector. With a proportionately smaller staff, but with all the complexity of a full-scale university, meeting the challenge for innovation is certainly helped by engagement beyond one's immediate sector into the wider HE community. The benefits of wider partnership bring both know-how and confidence, and this in turn is fulfilled through the subsequent competition and collaboration enabled within other specialist sector institutions and organisations. **Ripple** provided this opportunity to engage in wider partnership.

Credibility of the institution in the industry sector is reinforced by demonstration of "research into practice" and the quality and relevance of learning opportunities, and thus the release of exemplary OER and reference material to the land-based community does much to enhance this with both potential students and industry partners. **Ripple** provided opportunities to explore effective methods of achieving this impact.

More by default than design, educational resources at Harper Adams have traditionally been located directly in the internal virtual learning environment (VLE), their initial and immediate point of

consumption. As the agenda for repurposing and wider utilisation of such materials (e.g. through OER) has begun to evolve, the opportunity to reconsider this default location and explore the role of digital repositories and their benefits for syndication of material has become evident. **Ripple** provided opportunities to explore such changes of practice.

### 3. Outcomes and impact

The OpenFields open access repository project was initially focussed on providing a one-stop shop for the land-based sector for Technical Notes and for Research Papers. Initial debate on the complexity and value of extending this to encompass Open Learning Materials has been much advanced and influenced by exploratory work achieved through the **Ripple** project. This has resulted in some key changes and ongoing extensions to functionality of the OpenFields platform. In particular, the establishment of a pragmatically sound and workable metadata schema, and the development of persistent digital object identifiers were early wins, and the penetration of appreciation of the CC licencing model to contributors has been a valuable outcome.

Whilst it still remains for OpenFields to become firmly established as a national shared-service repository for the land-based sector, the alignment of its structure and content with the wider repository community, and potential to achieve interoperability, owes much to discussions facilitated through **Ripple**.

Whilst generating the early 'Technical Notes' content for OpenFields, and handling the accession of research papers, the workflow and rights-clearance processes soon became apparent, The **Ripple** project provided additional insight and verification for these early established processes and their subsequent extension to the context of OER.

Awareness of the implications, obligations and limitations of branding during the generation (and particularly during the retro-fit) of materials has been a useful outcome of the **Ripple** project and has influenced the pragmatics of corporate identity management in our production processes at Harper Adams.

The production of lengthy lecture-capture type videos (for potential OER and otherwise) has been mainly focused on potential re-use of external visiting speakers. The generation of online video has mostly been focussed on short summary, recap, overview or introductory videos, or short illustrative clips, destined for ready access to key points. The implication of this trend has been a demand for rapid production capacity (for transcoding to web format, titling, labelling, annotating, crediting and subsequent publication). With this in mind, Harper Adams is now investing in adoption of the OpenCast Matterhorn platform to facilitate this process on a significant scale, particularly for speeding up the handling of user-generated content, whether for OER or for internal consumption only.

Whilst legal aspects of materials offered under open-access had been explored earlier by the OpenFields team at Harper Adams, the focus had been more towards formal research outputs (e.g. research and conference papers). **Ripple** has broadened the relevance and appreciation of this understanding to a wider group of academics and this is improving the embedding of the surrounding work practices.

The value of appropriate and pragmatically applicable metadata is gradually being appreciated as colleagues encounter progressively more circumstances in which its use becomes apparent. Whilst cataloguing of assets in the past has been much thought of by teaching academics as 'best left to librarians', its value to those in search of learning resources effectively, and interested in their propagation and 'findability', has now begun to be more apparent to colleagues submitting and using materials. This is particularly notable when encouraging contributors to supply large photo

collections appropriately structured, titled and documented. The greatest appreciation of metadata value so far, though, has been through the tagging and organisation of large questionbanks.

#### 4. Implications for the future

**Commitment:** There is now a firm commitment amongst a small but influential cohort of Harper Adams staff to the release of exemplary materials (and useful component materials) as OER. This is partly by reason of personal impact and partly as a goodwill gesture to their colleagues (within and beyond the institution) to do likewise, in the hope of 'flushing out' mutually beneficial resources. Whilst many research colleagues are assisted on their career paths through publication of research papers, there is growing recognition that for teaching colleagues with a limited research portfolio, there is potential personal and institutional impact to be gained through a portfolio of OER release.

**Syndication:** There is unfortunately no past history of individual submission of OER materials to Jorum by Harper Adams staff; the perceived value of OER release is to locations which have an evident existing audience of land-based sector consumers. With this current reality in mind, if Jorum submission is to be achieved, then co-submission to both a sector-focussed repository (i.e. OpenFields) and to Jorum (through an automated process) is a desirable mid-term development.

**Audience targeting:** The perceived contributor- and consumer-value of a sectorally focussed repository which includes OER materials (as well as technical notes, grey literature and research papers) is threefold:

- The *honeypot* effect : the serendipity of users 'stumbling upon' useful resources whilst looking for something else in that subject area, and
- The *familiarity* value: the convenience of generating 'feeds' of appropriate resources for use in portfolios, in online modules, and on specialist community websites.
- The *known impact* value: the availability of usage statistics and feedback/commentary on one's contributions, from a known target audience.

Unfortunately for some potential contributors, the fear of receiving potentially negative comment in public view is a negative factor.

**Speed and simplicity:** Sufficient availability of capable editing and productivity tools (and support in their use) has been a significant factor in encouraging the generation of materials which authors felt to be of sufficient quality for OER release. Creating quality materials which at an early draft are copyright compliant and suitably annotated. Retrofits to achieve such compliance are disheartening. Templates for producing storyboards and wireframes (which also facilitate data-capture for subsequent rights clearance) can be useful.

Harper Adams is now adopting the OpenCast Matterhorn processing platform for handling user-generated video, potentially in significant volume. It will be important in the latter phases of its embedding to incorporate this tool into a workflow process which includes OER-release and the associated data-capture for compliance.

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