

# THETA

The Higher Education Technology Agenda

## Rethinking staff learning through collaborative online technology and the peer learning experience

In early 2014, UNSW Australia assigned management of copyright compliance for the organisation to the Library. As such, the Academic Services Unit (ASU), as the forward facing team in direct communication with academics, researchers and students, was then responsible for initially fielding many of the queries regarding copyright and licencing. In response, one key action for ASU in the UNSW Library Operational Plan 2013-14 was to develop staff capabilities to support the Library's growing role in copyright. The authors and two of the team leaders for ASU, Megan Saville and Julia Philips, undertook an online course on Copyright in Education run by P2PU Copyright-4-Educators (Australia) to enhance their own working knowledge of copyright. From this positive learning experience, a proposal was developed to run a more contextualised version of this course in-house and online at UNSW Library for staff. Approval was sought and provided from the creator of the original course Delia Browne, National Copyright Director for the National Copyright Unit (NCU). Once approved, the authors established a small project team of staff whom had also undertaken the original online course, to develop the UNSW Library Copyright 4 Higher Education MOC (minuscule online course) for the unit.

As with the original course, the UNSW Library Copyright 4 Higher Education in-house online course was not taught in the traditional sense. The course was facilitated solely online. Participants did not directly communicate with the authors or the project team the authors had established to run day-to-day activities and manage the course overall. All interactions happened online through collaborative enabling technology. Google drive was used as the course management system, with all weekly course readings and assessment tasks shared with participants through a weekly Gmail alert with a link to each week's Google docs. Course participants submitted their group assignments via Google docs and provided peer feedback through the same channel.

The running of the course was facilitated through peer-to-peer learning experiences,

requiring each individual to interact with their allocated group to complete assignments, as well as with the other groups taking the course by reviewing their answers to assignments. In this initial iteration, participants worked in groups of 4-5. To increase cross-unit collaboration, these groups were strategically assigned to cut across the ASU matrix of sub units – Services and Outreach Librarians and Humanities, Creative Arts & Social Sciences and Science Engineering and Medicine faculties. Each week's readings were sourced from openly available online content, readily enabling participants to bookmark and reuse after the course had finished to either to assist in answering academic/researcher/student queries or to gain deeper knowledge in an area of interest.

Email correspondence to the shared course facilitators' mailbox was encouraged if participants had technical issues, content-related queries, or even other relevant resources to recommend. In actuality, these streams of online anecdotal feedback enabled the authors and project team to responsively and dynamically refine and reshape the course. The feedback during the course led to a capstone week being developed to give participants a chance to reflect holistically across all the content covered – copyright, licencing, open educational resources, and MOOCs. Many groups had allocated answering questions to individual group members and so it was thought that working together on a capstone project would give all participants an opportunity to cover in more detail parts of the course they may have skimmed over. The capstone project required the groups to choose between either teaching and learning or research and to create a simple online flowchart covering relevant/irrelevant copyright and licencing issues.

The authors' aims for this course went beyond narrowly developing staff's working knowledge of copyright and licencing. They saw an opportunity to develop other professional skills in their staff and to practically broaden their understanding and experiences of innovations in the higher education environment. In undertaking and actively participating in this course, staff experienced the pedagogy underpinning massive open online courses (MOOCs); peer learning and peer review and online collaboration technology. The course further enabled staff to get a sense of skills and capabilities that higher education students are assumed to have to effectively participate in the majority of the courses they now study, especially in the light of growing use of flipped and blended learning modalities.

Setting up and steering the project team and facilitating the unfolding course also led to peer learning opportunities for the authors, in addition to consolidating prior knowledge of copyright and licencing issues. We found that participants were not as au fait with online collaborative learning technologies as we had previously believed considering the online nature of our profession. We also found that despite stated desires to be involved in more project work and project management activities, full advantage was not taken of the opportunities presented in this context. This has given the authors insight into the need to iteratively rethink how best to support staff development and peer learning in the unexpectedly unsettling arena of innovations in higher education.

Megan Saville and Julia Philips  
University of New South Wales



---

**SHARE THIS:**



Loading...

ONE THOUGHT ON "RETHINKING STAFF LEARNING THROUGH COLLABORATIVE ONLINE TECHNOLOGY AND THE PEER LEARNING EXPERIENCE"

**CierraDover999**

on **17 May 2015 at 1:13 pm** said:

0 0 Rate This

I am regular reader, how are you everybody? This article posted at this site is genuinely nice.

★ Like

Follow