A Research Tool - Overview

What is the purpose of this?

A prompt for conversation.

For UK HEIs to understand current institutional practice related to their own acquisition, distribution, and educational use of academic content.

To stimulate internal discussion in UK HEIs, and to scope suitability, readiness, and opportunities for move toward self-created academic content.

Why?

To explore a range of options associated with procurement of academic content
To explore the option of self-created and/or self-curated academic content
To explore the creation and/or acquisition of open-licenced academic content
To explore and to compare with the status quo:
  - Real cost savings of adoption of the above
  - Pedagogic benefits of adoption of the above
  - Institutional/research/reputational benefits of the adoption of the above

Who is this designed for?

UK HEI Senior Management/Strategy Teams/Academic Management/Support Teams

Key Questions:

1. What is the current practice of academic reference content acquisition and distribution? Consider scoping exercise… What are annual acquisition costs? What is
2. What is the purpose of investigating change?
3. To what extent is the institution behind the idea of ‘open’ content?

Key Considerations:

1. Current academic content acquisition practice across the institution = how are texts discovered/retrieved?
2. Current academic texts distribution practice across the institution = how are texts shared/provided?
3. Strategic aspiration of the institution, related to texts = where do they want to be – what is the motivation for change?
4. Appropriateness of current resource = where are the gaps?
5. Realistic institutional demands and tensions related to change
6. Author motivations
7. Distribution models
1.0 Establishing Current Practice

In short. How is academic content acquired, curated, and distributed across the Institution? To what extent is distributed academic content created by the Institution?

Suggested group:
Senior Management, Acquisitions Team,
Sample Academic Teams, Sample Student Groups,
Information Technology Team, Sample Research Teams.

Areas for Discussion:

1. Diagnose the range of distributed academic formats, for learning and teaching, used across the Institution.

For example:

- Scholarly publications (Journals),
- Professional/Trade sources,
- Conference proceedings,
- Theses, Dissertations,
- Lecture Notes,
- Popular sources (News, magazines),
- Books/Book chapters,
- Government documents,
- Courseware,
- Digital Materials.

2. Outline the current process of
   a. acquisition,
   b. curation, and,
   c. distribution of academic content across the University/College.

For example:

- Books/Book Chapters – acquired based on recommendation by academic team at creation of academic module. Library acquisition team purchase and make available ‘on-the-shelf’ one physical stock copy for every 20 course-matriculated students. Chapters requested by academic team are digitised by library team and placed on VLE course. Students may access chapter content directly in the VLE.

3. Discuss current academic content acquisition, curation and distribution for:
   a. identifiable costs to the institution,
   b. considered benefits to learning and teaching,
   c. presumed and actual usage data,
   d. considered relevance and timeliness in relation to academic content.

For example:

Scholarly publications – we subscribe to a very large number of journals and have done for years. As expected, much of our library’s budget is proportioned for this. I think that electronic journals are such an ingrained resource, that we haven’t really stopped to look at how beneficial they might be for learning, or actually how much content is really pointed-at for academic purpose. I would put a question-mark against some of our choices.
2.0 Focus on Change

In short. What opportunities exist, within the Institution, for movement towards self-created academic content?

Suggested group:
Senior Management, Sample Academic Teams,
Sample Student Groups, Information Technology Team.

Areas for Discussion:

1. Consider, from the list of current academic formats for learning and teaching (above), the extent to which some content is already created by the Institution. Are there teams, individuals across the Institution, exploring self-created content?

For example: The digital materials are really the only things we produce ourselves – in dribs and drabs by instructional designers – and these stay in the courses in the VLE. We do have our own academic journal and, of course, our students’ dissertations are bound and available in the library. But that’s about it. I know that the Social Sciences team stopped adding electronic journals and books as key texts on their new courses from last year – key texts are now the staff’s own content. We have excellent designers in educational development teams – it’s a shame that they’re diverse across the University though.

2. Discuss the below, suggesting teams or individuals in the Institution most suited to the associated tasks. Highlight gaps.

On the basis of discussion, how might teams be organised - centrally/locally?

The value of self-created academic content is likely to be greater when creative processes consider some or all of the following elements:

a. Management – consideration for the overall process,
b. Commission – outline requirements, ‘recruitment’, style, suitability,
c. Authoring – create of ‘raw’ content,
d. Production – assemble content in appropriate form,
e. Edits – check and update raw/produced content,
f. Distribution – provide final form in appropriate channel,
g. Analysis/Revision – suggest value and further change.

3. When considering a move, for the Institution, towards exploring self-created content, outline and explore:

a. Opportunities – what is already ‘in place’, what could be achieved?
b. Tensions - what is difficult to change?
c. Outputs and Timescales – what is realistic?
d. Measures – what looks good, what are the standards?
3.0 Authoring and Distribution

In short. Consider tensions for authoring and distribution of self-created academic content. Discussions around Closed versus Open versus Commercial distribution models.

Suggested group:

Senior Management, Sample Academic Teams,
Information Technology Team, Sample Student Groups.

Areas for Discussion:

1. Explore realistic motivations for authors (refer to 2c, above) to contribute time and content. Are there opportunities to incentivise?

For example:

I can see us mostly working with academics to produce content, but also with our instructional design team to put everything together, and maybe even students themselves. All are really busy, and I can see big challenges with getting some people interested, but lots of academics would like that content is more suited for their students than ‘off-the-shelf’ journals and, I suppose, that academic teams could add to their research outputs. There could be opportunities to discuss small time allocation, with academic teams. For the designers, there’s a sense of being more directly involved in what students consume.

2. Discuss the below, suggesting whether you see opportunities for the Institution through any of the examples, or variations of them. Suggest others.

Distribution model #1 – Closed. Example: Self-created content (courseware) is written by academic teams, edited and published, by the educational development team, and made available in relevant modules across the VLE.

Distribution model #1 – Open. Example: Self-created content (various) is written by academic teams, edited and published, by the educational development team, and made available, for free, across various OER platforms.

Distribution model #3 – Commercial. Example: Academic content (textbooks) written by academic teams, edited and published, by the educational development team, and distributed across Amazon, commercially, to the outside world. Profit from sales is redistributed for future self-created content.

3. ?
4.0 Next Steps

**In short.** Discuss and propose realistic steps that the Institution should take to move towards self-created content creation and distribution.

**Areas for Discussion:**

1. Which individuals should be involved in wider ongoing discussions? Who should be involved in self-created content production cycles?

2. What opportunities already exist, across the Institution, for self-created content? What new opportunities might arise?

3. What benefits, and what challenges, are likely if the idea is pursued? What motivations (particularly for authors) might be required?

4. What support and guidance is available from JISC?
   - a. Link to x
   - b. Link to y
   - c. Link to z

5. What is a realistic timescale for cycle of self-created content production?

6. What is the measure for success?