



EdShare: towards sharing resources for learning and teaching at the University of Southampton

At the University of Southampton, in the UK, we have been developing the Research Repository (e-Prints Soton) since 2005, to showcase the research output and make it more accessible. As a significant next step, the University has taken the strategic decision to develop a repository for educational materials. We are using the well-established EPrints repository software currently deployed worldwide by over 200 repository applications.

This contributes to the overarching vision for repositories within the University to link more deeply the products and activities of both scholarship and research.

In the 2007-2009 JISC-funded Institutional Exemplar Project EdSpace, we are developing EdShare, a system which is intended to be easy to use, lightweight, nimble and sustainable. The intent is to be simple in design and to present only a very low threshold for adding content.

The University has used Blackboard software since 2000 as a means of delivering electronic access to course content. This Virtual Learning

Environment (VLE) however, limits possible collaboration, sharing and visibility for educational resources. Content is accessible only to those registered for a specific course with which it is associated. We want people in different faculties, from across the institution, to be able to view, comment on, re-use, tailor and to contribute to development of the content. These individuals may be in a range of roles: developing, designing, delivering and supporting educational materials, resources and processes. From these activities there may emerge new collaborations, groups or interests to enrich the student experience further. We intend also to develop inter-operability between this new repository and other institutional systems which support learning and teaching (e.g. VLEs and portals).

In its functionality, we are seeking to implement an extremely simple deposit which takes advantage of some of the key Web 2.0 developments since the research repository was conceived. Other elements we are interested to include are: ease of deposit e.g. auto-complete tagging options (which guide as well as facilitate selection of tags); metrics on viewing and downloading as encouragement for people to add content; and minimal barriers to sharing e.g. very few mandatory fields for completion.

In developing a resource which enables this sharing, we hope to develop a richer understanding of processes of institutional change and integration at both a strategic and discipline level. We can build on experience with the research repository which has provided some key insights into effective levers for integrating individual and institutional research processes. We now need to develop a better understanding of the institutional processes relating to the teaching agenda. We anticipate that there will be finer gradations of openness in this domain than in the research arena, from the individual to the global academic community. In developing EdShare at Southampton, we are promoting a shift to a more outward-looking, open, and collaborative approach to scholarship.