MAKING A MOOC:
AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO TEACHING WEB SCIENCE

Su White
Web and Internet Science, ECS
University of Southampton
SO17 1BJ, UK
saw@ecs.soton.ac.uk
http://www.ecs.soton.ac.uk/people/saw/

Hugh C Davis
Web and Internet Science, ECS
University of Southampton
SO17 1BJ, UK
hcd@ecs.soton.ac.uk
http://www.ecs.soton.ac.uk/people/hcd/

Kate Dickens
CITE
University of Southampton
SO17 1BJ, UK
kate.dickens@soton.ac.uk
http://www.cite.soton.ac.uk/members/

Abstract

MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) are gradually capturing the public imagination. From experimentalist beginnings in Canada, platforms ranging from 'homebrew' to professional have emerged, and although there has been much focus on US platforms, the phenomenon has grown on a worldwide scale. One feature of the early generations of MOOCs has been that courses are typically developed by individual enthusiasts or high profile academics often developing into a cult of personality.

in 2012 various UK institutions entered the fray including the Universities of Edinburgh and London who used the US Coursera platform. In 2013 a consortium led by the Open University launched FutureLearn to predominantly host British courses. The University of Southampton was an early FutureLearn partner.

This presentation provides an account of the collaborative and interdisciplinary approach adopted in the MOOC 'Web Science: how the Web is changing the world'. Because Web Science is fundamentally interdisciplinary, this MOOC is not the work of one highly motivated individual, nor is any one individual able to cover the range of specialisms. The course has strong STEM components but encompasses elements of politics, sociology, computer science, mathematics, economics, business and management. The course has been co-ordinated by an educational developer supported by a team of educational specialists working alongside academic 'educators'.

The challenge is to provide coherence and continuity for learners' experiencing materials drawn from multiple sources and multiple authors. The paper explains the mechanisms to co-ordinate the team and create a consistent learning experience illustrated by evaluations, reflections and user reactions.

Keywords
MOOCs, Interdisciplinary, Web Science, online learning, student experience.