

Does Open Pedagogy Require OER?

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Editor's Note

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I recently had the opportunity to attend a [student showcase](#) of Digital Humanities projects, put on by the Digital Pedagogy Network. The Digital Pedagogy Network is a collaborative project between the University of Victoria and Simon Fraser University.

The context of the event was to give Digital Humanities students an opportunity to showcase the DH projects they have been working on to fulfill the requirements of their various undergrad/graduate level DH programs at UVIC and SFU. I am grateful to SFU Digital Scholarship Librarian (and Whitecaps soccer fan) [Rebecca Dowson](#) for suggesting that I attend. I am very happy that I did.

First and foremost, the student projects are fantastic. These are students that are working hard to capture and preserve significant, but often overlooked, pieces of our cultural heritage, like the [Fred Wah](#) archives. Fred Wah is a Canadian writer and Parliamentary Poet Laureate. His online archive is a DH project by English student [Deanna Fong](#). Then there is the [Wosk-McDonald Aldine Collection](#) a digital preservation project being worked on by DH students and made available on the open web which celebrates the work of Aldus Manutius, “the Renaissance’s most innovative scholarly publisher”. There is a [curated digital exhibition](#) that explores authorship and readership of Victorian-era pornography

created by BA students Erin Huxley, Keirsten Mend, Donna Langille and Leah de Roy, and a [cultural mapping](#) exhibition of the legends that are included in E. Pauline Johnson's 1911 text, *Legends of Vancouver*, which is based on the narratives of Chief Joe Capilano of the Squamish nation (and which prompted a great discussion around the tensions involved with non-Indigenous people researching and mapping Indigenous territories).

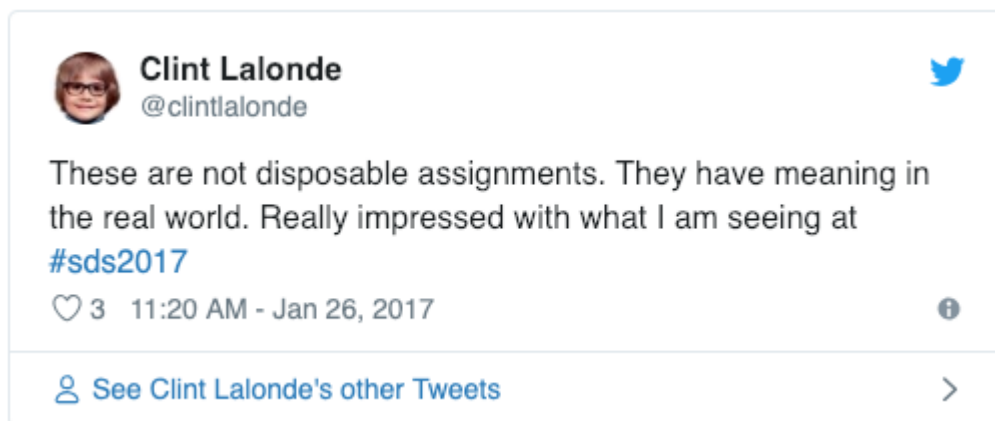
All of these educational resources, created by students and available on the open web. But none openly licensed.

Which made me consider open pedagogy and the way in which open pedagogy is defined. Granted, that term "open pedagogy" is fairly new and evolving. My first exposure to the term was in a 2013 (was it really 4 years ago?) [blog post](#) from David Wiley where David defines open pedagogy as being directly connected to the (at the time) 4R permissions of OER (emphasis mine).

*Open pedagogy is that set of teaching and learning practices only possible in the context of the free access **and 4R permissions characteristic of open educational resources.***

So, with that definition, the assignments that these students have done are not open pedagogy. While some of them do use open access resources (mostly public domain resources), none of the students have released their material with an open license, and, in fact, [some resources](#) are made available with full copyright and only under academic fair use policy.

But yet publicly available. On the open web. Students working on the open web, on meaningful projects.



But yet, not open pedagogy, at least by David's definition.

Which made me wonder: is open pedagogy only possible if the work by a student meets the 5R open licensing criteria? Or is what makes open pedagogy open is that students are working in the open with their work on display to the world? Is that the defining feature of open pedagogy?

Don't get me wrong. Encouraging students to release meaningful and significant work they do with an open license is the best possible outcome as it enables the widest possible distribution and application of their work. But if a student creates a meaningful piece of work and simply makes it open access on the web without actually assigning an open license to the work, does that make it a less meaningful and impactful open pedagogy experience?

To the students who created these projects, I would say the answer is no. In a Q&A I asked them to talk about working in the open and how they felt as students to have their work in the open and view-able to the world. Their responses were that they felt it was important to have their work in the open; that they felt the work they were doing needed to be open and accessible to the wider world, and the world needed to know about this work. Not one said the reason they wanted their work open was to have it reflect favourably on them, or that it would look good as part of a digital resume/portfolio. They felt an urgency that their subject matter be made available to the broader public. It mattered to them, and that motivated them. They wanted to do justice to their subject matter.

To me, this is open pedagogy. The motivation that it gives to students that what they do matters in the world. That they are contributing to something bigger and greater than themselves. That the work is meaningful. Yes, it would have an even greater impact if this work was released with an open license, but the fact that this work is not openly licensed doesn't make it any less of an open pedagogy exercise to me.

As I was expressing this point on Twitter, Tannis Morgan at the JIBC sent me a link to a [wonderful blog post](#) she wrote that made me realize that, despite having a French-Canadian last name, I should have paid closer attention to French class. In the post, Tannis digs into the history of the term open pedagogy and finds traces of it in the linguistic culture wars of a 1979 Canada with Quebec educator named Claude Paquette.

Paquette outlines 3 sets of foundational values of open pedagogy, namely: autonomy and interdependence; freedom and responsibility; democracy and participation.

In her post, Tannis wraps up with an astute observation

In other words, open pedagogy is currently a sort of proxy for the use and creation of open educational resources as opposed to being tied to a broader pedagogical objective.

Which begs the question; what is the broader pedagogical objective of open pedagogy? Does open pedagogy only exist when it is connected to the use and production of OER's?

Addendum: After I wrote this, I realized that I had read an [excellent 2014 interview](#) with [Tom Woodward](#) in Campus Technology where Tom spoke at length about open pedagogy as a broad and holistic set of values and approaches.

Looking at open pedagogy as a general philosophy of openness (and connection) in all elements of the pedagogical process, while messy, provides some interesting possibilities. Open is a purposeful path towards connection and community. Open pedagogy could be considered as a blend of strategies, technologies, and networked communities that make the process and products of education more transparent, understandable, and available to all the people involved.

I think this holistic view of open pedagogy as a messy space where the values of openness inform teaching and learning practices is one that appeals to me.



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