OERs and DIYU

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Why OERs

- Let me begin with the quote...

I want and visualize and aspire toward a system of society and learning where each person is able to rise to his or her fullest potential without social or financial encumbrance, where they may express themselves fully and without reservation through art, writing, athletics, invention, or even through their avocations or lifestyle. Where they are able to form networks of meaningful and rewarding relationships with their peers, with people who share the same interests or hobbies, the same political or religious affiliations - or different interests or affiliations, as the case may be. This to me is a society where knowledge and learning are public goods, freely created and shared, not hoarded or withheld in order to extract wealth or influence. This is what I aspire toward, this is what I work toward.

What does that mean?

- I want and visualize and aspire toward a system of society and learning
  - Yes, this is a vision statement, but it's a personal vision statement – part of my own program for learning - http://halfanhour.blogspot.com/2006/08/things-you-really-need-to-learn.html
  - Society and learning are not separate (though we do it that way today) – each intimately involves the other

- where each person is able to rise to his or her fullest potential
  - The Greeks called it ἀρετή (arete) - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arete
  - Each individual has his or her (or its!) own individual virtue
  - The idea is that we each achieve our own sort of excellence, not someone else's
    - Compare that to the sort of vision expressed here – "the development of our greatest asset–the potential of our people" - http://www.downes.ca/post/52189

- without social or financial encumberance
  - Education and social equity go hand in hand – poverty is the single greatest predictor of a failure to achieve (or to be healthy, or to turn to crime, etc. Etc.)
  - Poverty, though, is not the only barrier – there is a host of social pressures contrary to learning
    - Not the least of which are some of the pressures in our schools, which value conformity over achievement - http://www.torontosun.com/news/world/2010/04/07/13501391.html

- where they may express themselves fully and without reservation
  - Notice the key role of *expression* – expression is central to arete
  - I seek more than mere freedom, I seek empowerment
  - Aside law, fear is a major constraint preventing people from expressing themselves
  - As is a lack of capacity, capability, ability – we learn to *repeat*, not to create

- through art, writing, athletics, invention, or even through their avocations or lifestyle
  - There is not just one 'language of thought'
  - Communication is not about describing or telling; it's about showing or demonstrating
  - We *induce* ideas and expressions, rather bthan pass them on - http://halfanhour.blogspot.com/2010/04/personal-knowledge-transmission-or.html
  - Communication is multi-faceted (pragmatics, semantics, etc) - http://www.downes.ca/presentation/237

- Where they are able to form networks of meaningful and rewarding relationships with their peers
  - The idea of networks, not groups (connections, not mass) http://www.downes.ca/presentation/53
  - The idea of exchanges of mutual value (not teacher-student, boss-employee) http://www.downes.ca/post/33383

- with people who share the same interests or hobbies
  - The concept of 'homophily' – associating with people like oneself http://halfanhour.blogspot.com/2007/10/homophily-and-association.html
  - This brings us to the idea of the community of practice - http://www.ewenger.com/theory/
  - But not the idea that it must all be about work and employment - http://www.downes.ca/post/25
  - This idea is basic to networks and networking – cf. Hebb - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_O._Hebb

- the same political or religious affiliations
  - We each have multiple dimensions of being and self identification
  - Many legitimate ways to be a part of a 'mass', as it were, which help define us
  - Portraits of Montreal:
    1. http://www.flickr.com/photos/stephen_downes/sets/72157621512571137/
    2. http://www.flickr.com/photos/stephen_downes/sets/72157621698532742/
    3. http://www.flickr.com/photos/stephen_downes/sets/72157621712848174/

- or different interests or affiliations, as the case may be
  - Diversity is essential to creativity – http://www.daniel-lemire.com/fr/abstracts/DIVERSITY2008.html
  - The concept of 'bridging', which creates a 'community of communities'
  - This is a key argument against the boradcasting monoculture – http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=2079
  - A 'holographic' model of cognition and perception

- This to me is a society where knowledge and learning are public goods
  - If knowledge and learning cannot be exchanged freely, social discourse atrophies, and society dies
    - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alzheimer%27s_disease
  - It is essential to reframe the issue of copyright, to identify what was created and what is merely appropriated from the common weal -
    http://www.downes.ca/cgi-bin/page.cgi?post=65
    http://halfanhour.blogspot.com/2010/02/capitalists-and-parking-spots.html

- freely created and shared
  - Stallman's four freedoms: http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html
    - Freedom to run (use, read, access)
    - Freedom to study (take apart, understand, learn)
    - Freedom to redistribute
    - Freedom to modify and reshape
  - But – from whose perspective? Whose freedoms?
    - This is the hinge on which the 'noncommercial' debate hangs – your freedom to prevent access (by demanding money) against my freedom to access
      http://www.downes.ca/files/Downes-Wiley.pdf

- not hoarded or withheld in order to extract wealth or influence
  - A*mass*ing is described by power laws
  - But power laws are (contrary to publishers and (some) book writers not 'natural') http://www.downes.ca/post/14
  - The logic of the network (and 'collective intelligence') requires many 'small' voices (loosely joined) - http://www.smallpieces.com/

- This is what I aspire toward, this is what I work toward.
  - It's not just theory
  - I work on it in RSS, etc.
  - You can see this *modeled* in my website http://www.downes.ca
  - Or in the 'Massive Open Online Course' George Siemens and I built http://connect.downes.ca

PostScripts

- On models of 'sustainable' OERs
  - Why is it, I wonder, we see such an emphasis on OER producers
  - Why do we hear from these same producers the desire to allow 'commercial' use?
  - I think: much of the OER movement consists of publishers (including universities) looking for subsidies – they will then sell the 'OERs' and we will *never* (eg., never on Kindle, iTunes) see the free versions

- On the idea that OERs are 'not enough'
  - Where is the sense in which we would simply 'throw' OERs out there?
  - The whole *model* of OERs I propose involves a sustaining *community* http://www.downes.ca/post/33401
  - These aren't 'learning' resources, these are 'thinking' resources (objects to think with)

- On the Idea of DIY
  - The purpose of, say, open source, was never to simply create software – it was always to 'scratch an itch', to make things, in some way, better
  - We are not creating DIY *Universities* (goodness gracious, why would we recreate *that*?)
  - We are creating DIY *People*
  - Specifically, ourselves http://www.downes.ca/web20.htm