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Librarians as Resource auditors in Digital Learning landscape: A case with UNESWA and its blended learning projects

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The emerging digital learning landscape demands collaborative approach from educators to provide student centred learning environment. The University of Eswatini in its new strategic plan identified the need to implement blended learning which combines online digital media with traditional classroom method to provide an electronic as well as face-to-face learning platform. This shift in teaching paradigm necessitated the need for collaboration between different stakeholders especially the educators, technologists and information specialists. In order to provide a balanced blended learning space the educators require ICT skills, specifically digital media manipulation and implementation as well as digital resources to enhance their teaching methods. This created an opportunity for libraries to transform itself as digital resource repositories and librarians as digital resource auditors. This paper illustrates how the university of Eswatini Library used this opportunity to create an Open Educational Resource Repository which is used as the digital repository for blended learning tools and librarians as resource auditors in the digital learning landscape.

Open educational resources (OER) are free and openly licensed educational materials that can be used for teaching, learning, research, and other purposes. William and Flora Hewlett Foundation defines OER as "teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others. Open educational resources include full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge." In order to streamline access to the OER resources especially to use them in the blended learning tools which the educators develop, the university of Eswatini Library developed an Open Educational Resource Gateway. This gateway is available at http://www.library.uniswa.sz/oer. The development of OER Gateway allowed the lecturers to freely use content from OER repositories and sources especially multimedia and images. The focus of the gateway is to provide a one-stop entry into the world of Open Educational Resources. With months of research the gateway was established with links to various repositories and OER projects around the globe.

This paper demonstrates how libraries which traditionally act as knowledge repositories continue to support and collaborate in the digital learning landscape to provide digital resources for changing learning environment. Various steps taken to populate the OER gateway especially analysing and group the content into various broad categories for the lecturers to use them and how the gateway has been updated both for the desktop users as well as for the mobile users, the advantages of providing content on the move and pushing the content as and when it is published and providing the desired content as a service are analysed in the paper. Screenshots of the desktop as well as the mobile app for OER are provided. This paper also looks at the challenges in sustaining such a huge project and the future of this project.

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