



MOOCs at Karolinska Institutet University Library

This article discusses how recent developments around net-based learning, with massive open online courses (MOOCs) as an example, can provide an opportunity for university libraries to redefine their role within the university organization. At the Karolinska Institutet University Library (KIB), we are deeply involved in the process of producing our University's first MOOCs. This has given the Library many new opportunities, but we have also come across some challenges that we have needed to address. A new role implies many new considerations, and gives the Library the opportunity to develop the way it works and the services it provides. Libraries such as ours have excellent opportunities to really contribute to the development of our universities by offering our expertise in the fields of literature acquisition including open access (OA), metadata and archiving, information literacy and student support, ICT and pedagogy. This is more relevant than ever in the age of MOOCs.

Introduction

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are aimed at an unlimited number of participants. In addition to traditional course materials such as videos, reading texts and problem sets, MOOCs often provide tools for interaction, in order to build a community for students and lecturers. The first MOOC was launched in 2008 and since then development has 'exploded'. Today there are at least three large American MOOC providers – edX, Udacity and Coursera. In Europe, development has also been swift, not least in the UK where FutureLearn was launched in 2013. In the summer of 2013, Karolinska Institutet (KI) decided to join the edX Consortium.

Edx was formed in 2012 by the two American, Boston-based universities, Harvard and MIT. Today edX is still governed by those universities but it has more than 30 universities from around the world as collaborative partners in the edX consortium. Four principles guide the edX collaboration:

- not for profit
- open source platform
- collaborative
- financially sustainable.

MOOC development at Karolinska Institutet

Karolinska Institutet, which is one of the world's leading medical universities, was founded in 1810 and is situated in Stockholm, Sweden. It is a very research-extensive university, accounting for over 40 per cent of all medical research conducted in Sweden, and provides the country's broadest range of education in medicine and health sciences. The development of internet-based education has been ongoing since the 90s, but still today the vast majority of the education is carried out on campus. A learning management system (LMS) has been in place since 2002. This is mainly used for distance education, although in later years its use in blended learning in campus courses has grown.



CARINA AHLBERG
Head of Department
Educational
Technology Support
Karolinska Institutet
University Library
Sweden

161 The Karolinska Institutet University Library (KIB) is the largest medical library in Scandinavia, with around 115 employees. One of its departments is the Department for Educational Technology Support, of which I am Head. This Department has 13 members; mainly trained as educational technologists but we also have librarians, filmmakers, teachers and a graphic designer. Our department runs the LMS, and trains and supports the teaching faculty in its use of IT and other technology tools for education.

Since January 2013, the Department for Educational Technology Support has also been a member of the Centre of Learning and Knowledge (CLK). The CLK was inaugurated in 2013, as part of a mobilization of competence in education. The membership in edX and the commitment to MOOC creation is another aspect of this mobilization. KI's goal is to produce four MOOCs on the edX.org platform in 2014, and the CLK has been put in charge of this process. We are producing the MOOCs together with the chosen lecturers. They have been selected through an open round of proposals within KI. Production is now in progress. Our first two MOOCs are due to start in September, and the remaining two later this year. We also intend to have up to seven smaller, national MOOCs (also called NOOCs) up and running on a local edX platform at KI. The role(s) of the Library in the production process may vary over time, but at the moment we play a very active role in the MOOC teams. Film teams, graphic design, some instructional design, publishing and platform training are some of our responsibilities, and one of the two project leaders for the first two MOOCs that will be up and running in September is from the Library.

"[The] goal is to produce four MOOCs in 2014"

The role of the library

This of course gives our Library at KI a rather influential position in the process of creating MOOCs. Our long experience in the creation of internet-based courses and our membership within the CLK give us a natural role, but it has been more difficult to define how the more traditional library services can be utilized in the MOOC environment. Since MOOCs are a totally new activity for universities everywhere, it is only natural that it will take some time for everyone to gain clarity regarding the different roles. However, it is clear to me that nobody else will tell us how libraries can contribute; we need to find that out for ourselves.

So, what have we at KIB done so far?

- We started by having a workshop for the library management team, where everyone prepared by reading two articles about university libraries and MOOCs^{1,2} This led to the formation of a smaller working group within the management, and this in turn led to the activities below.
- Content licensing: we are at the moment in discussions with a publisher regarding the experimental use of one of their course books in a MOOC, and this seems to be a real possibility.
- Alerting MOOC developers to open content and encouraging the use of open licensing for learning objects we produce ourselves. We have constructed a web page with tips on how to find open access and Creative Commons licensed material that can be used in a MOOC.
- Information literacy training: we have formed a group that is considering how we can provide training for MOOC students and thus contribute to their information literacy development. This group is also working together with the larger edX library group, which is compiling best practices so far. See more below.
- We have made an investment in educational technology support by recruiting more staff, mainly educational technologists, but also in studios for film and sound recording. We had started this process already before the MOOCs came into the picture, which of course turned out to be really useful.

"... it has been ... difficult to define how the more traditional library services can be utilized in the MOOC environment."

162 Being librarians, as many of us are, we have naturally tried to find literature on this subject – MOOC creation from the library’s point of view. From what we have read and heard so far^{3,4,5}, and not much had been published when we started, it seems that the experiences of others are very similar to ours. Of course, there may be variations due to different traditions and laws, and some libraries mention difficulties in getting a ‘seat at the table’. This is something that we – as I mentioned above – achieved directly thanks to our long and deep involvement in the creation of internet-based courses.

Management of a new role

One challenge we have come across is the lack of legal skills among Library staff. We have long experience of dealing with copyright issues as acquirers of scientific material and also as producers of internet-based courses for our own community of students and faculty. However, since the openness and the scale of a MOOC are so much greater, we need to make sure that we anticipate as many issues up-front as possible. We do not have our own lawyers in the Library so we need to ensure that the University lawyers have time to consult with us fully. They have done this so far, to some extent, and together with them we have created a checklist of things to think about from a legal perspective when planning a MOOC. This raises many questions among the teaching staff regarding the copyright ownership of materials they produce themselves – what rights does their employer, the University, have, compared to their own individual rights. This is an issue that is not necessarily unique to MOOCs, but the teaching staff have not really had any reason to reflect over it before – and the scale of a MOOC is so much greater than that of a ‘normal’ university course. We in Europe are very much governed by EU law, which is slightly different than the US law that governs many of the original edX partners. Here a presentation held by Audrey Ego at the eMOOCs conference⁶ in Lausanne was helpful to us. For instance, there is no ‘fair use’ exception in European copyright legislation as there is in the US. Instead we need to work with either employed works released under a licence, works fallen into the public domain or request the permission of the author.

“... there is no ‘fair use’ exception in European copyright legislation as there is in the US.”

Another challenge has been the cultural clashes within the University that become evident when co-operating closely with other departments. The differences were evident in, for instance, how we looked upon work hours, sharing of information, which project methods and tools to use or our own roles as experts and/or support functions. The only way to solve this is of course to talk to each other and set up some ‘ground rules’. I think we have managed to do that successfully so far and we have gained new experiences of how the rest of the University works. Getting more involved within your ‘parent organization’ is always useful for a library. It gives us the opportunity to better understand what the needs are and how we as a library can provide even better and more relevant services.

A third challenge has been trying to think about how we could provide training for information literacy in the MOOC environment, without losing any of the qualities that we have in our other teaching activities. The KI Library has a long and proud tradition of successfully training students and postgraduate students so they can develop their information literacy. The training is both integrated in the courses, adapted to the subject and student centred, using many interactive teaching methods with a broad perspective of the scientific publishing process. Normally, we give the training sessions in smaller groups, and with quite a lot of personal feedback on, for instance, search assignments. All of these qualities need to be carefully considered when thinking about adapting our training to a MOOC setting, with courses that are given simultaneously for thousands of students. We have not had the time or the opportunity to do that in the first MOOCs we have produced, but it will be a goal for the future.

“... we all need to explore the nature of this new ‘animal’ to which few of our old rules apply.”

Working with a MOOC is a significant overall challenge, since it is something entirely new to most parts of the University, administrative functions and faculty and students alike, and we all need to explore the nature of this new ‘animal’ to which few of our old rules apply.

What are the opportunities?

Collaboration and involvement within the University

Through this work, we gain a deeper knowledge of how other parts of the University work and think. Once we have overcome the cultural clashes mentioned above, we can achieve great things in collaboration with faculty, students and educational developers. The MOOCs have also given us an opportunity to collaborate with lawyers, archivists and other administrative functions within KI. We have learned a lot about what they are experts on, and there is overall a greater respect for what the Library is capable of doing.

“...there is overall a greater respect for what the Library is capable of doing.”

International and national collaboration

The MOOC projects provide great opportunities to collaborate with other libraries around the world, first of all within the edX consortium, but also nationally in Sweden and with other colleagues all over the globe. The library community is traditionally very generous in the sharing of knowledge, time and resources and I think this gives us strength in this new world of open education. It is also something from which other participants in the process can learn.

Marketing the library

Involvement in MOOC production is a great chance to market the skills and competencies of library staff. At least for our Library, the MOOCs have meant that we have had occasion to market our skills in teaching and learning as well as in many other areas such as open access, information retrieval, indexing and publishing. We are already in charge of the traditional LMS support and well respected for that, but the MOOC projects have made it obvious that we can do much more.

Speeding up the development

We would of course like to continue our tradition of meaningful training for the development of information literacy among students in the world of MOOCs. We have done this to a lesser extent before, through the LMS, but the MOOCs force us to rethink what we can do on a much larger scale, and more quickly than we would otherwise have done. We have provided online courses through the LMS, as well as web quests, for several years. The move towards larger student groups has been going on for a while, but we were not really prepared for such larger groups, so quickly. Perhaps this is a good thing. Sometimes the best strategy is to try something out without too much preparation and planning. We are just in the beginning of this development and the plans for how we can adapt to it are being made now, so it is too early to say what they will be at the moment. We will also need to think about the archival and metadata issues. We can probably run each MOOC several times, if we get the funding and if the course leaders wish to do so. But in that case they will need to be updated and revised. Eventually, they will in any case be closed, and then what will happen? How can our MOOCs and the learning objects they contain be retrieved in the future? There are still a couple of open questions, and in Sweden at least the legislation is somewhat unclear. There is still no institutional repository in place at KI for internet-based courses, and the necessary archiving is made through paper print-outs. However, I consider even this to be an opportunity, since it is most likely that the MOOCs will also speed up the development of e-archiving, which is much needed.

Quality assurance

We will also have the chance to get some research done around what does and does not work in internet-based courses, thanks to the learning analytics that will be carried out, based on the data that can be retrieved concerning user behaviour in the MOOCs. The more we as a library get involved in this, the more data we can acquire, for instance on where students tend to ‘give up’ and leave the course. Based on this, we should be able to improve our own teaching.

Are there any risks?

The production of MOOCs takes time – lots of time that we could have chosen to use in another way. It is of course always open to discussion how library management chooses to utilize staff time and other resources. We may risk missing something else that is also important. Here, we are guided by the vision for the Library in 2021 that all the staff created together in 2011. According to this vision, we should then be even deeper involved in internet-based learning activities, and therefore I think that our involvement in the MOOCs is the right thing to do now. This paper is somewhat biased but the risk appears greater to not be involved in these projects. Then we would run the risk of the Library being considered to be a separate, more old-fashioned function, not an integrated part of modern education. As future university education becomes more and more open, MOOCs will become an important part of that development. So we can choose to play an important role, and thereby both support our universities and create the library of the future.

“... MOOCs seem to provide a great opportunity for us to create new collaborations ...”

Of course, there is always a risk that the MOOCs turn out to be a total failure after a few years' 'hype'. And I suppose what would constitute a failure would be if no or very few students took our courses. In that case, we would have spent a great deal of time and money on something that will not be used by the intended audience. Nevertheless, we would have had the collaborations mentioned above and gained a lot of experience that can be useful in the future. Through the MOOC projects we hope to learn more about how our users work, what the needs are and how we can develop our services accordingly. We have, for instance, seen a great need for workshops around film creation – script writing, film editing and other kinds of pre- and post-production activities. We have also learned a lot about the importance of being prepared, of having a mutually agreed project plan and of spending enough time on that at the beginning of a new project.

The investments we have made in both infrastructure and competence can be useful in many other ways, and nothing suggests that internet-based learning in some form is not here to stay. Supporting that will continue to be an important part of the future university library.

Conclusion

I think almost everyone can agree today that academic education of the future will at least not exclusively take place in the physical campus environment but also – if not entirely – in a virtual learning environment. If that is to be the case, then we as libraries need to embrace it and do our best to be part of the future and find ways to be an academic partner, in the same way as we always have been, throughout history. This can of course be done in other ways and many libraries have chosen other means for a long time but, at least at our University, the MOOCs seem to provide a great opportunity for us to create new collaborations and new ways of getting more involved in faculty work. Personal contacts should not be underestimated, and as mentioned before, we now have a 'seat at the table' and are invited to discussions with university management to a much greater extent than before.

“... we now have a 'seat at the table' ...”

So far, our MOOC-related activities have meant that we have gained a much more prominent role within KI's education. This could not have been done without the many talented and creative people working at the KI Library. I am also very grateful to those who paved the way for us, who already at the beginning of the IT era understood the importance of having a high level of expertise in both IT and pedagogy within the Library. This has given us a solid foundation for collaborations both within and outside the University; we know what we are talking about and we have a long experience in the creation of internet-based courses, which is much needed now. That is useful for us and for our University today, and it will continue to be useful in the future.

References

1. Gore, H, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Their Impact on Academic Library Services: Exploring the Issues and Challenges, *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 2014, 20(1) : <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13614533.2013.851609> (accessed 20 May 2014).
2. Barnes, C, MOOCs, The Challenges for Academic Librarians, *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, 2013, 44(3), 163–175: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00048623.2013.821048> (accessed 20 May 2014).
3. Gore, H, ref. 1.
4. Barnes, C, ref. 2
5. Workshop at Conference: Internet Librarian International, 14 October 2013, London. Alcock, J et al, Libraries & MOOCs 2013: getting involved and making it work: <http://www.internet-librarian.com/2013/Workshops.php#TrackWorkshops> (accessed 20 May 2014).
6. Presentation at Conference: eMOOCs 2014, Lausanne. Ego, A, in Pongratz, H et al 'Talking about Data'; Data Ownership, Ethics and Intellectual Property: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/207956432/EMOOCs-2014-Policy-Track-4-Pongratz> (accessed 20 May 2014).

Article copyright: © 2014 Carina Ahlberg. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence, which permits unrestricted use and distribution provided the original author and source are credited.



Carina Ahlberg

Head of Department Educational Technology Support

Karolinska Institutet University Library / Centre of Learning and Knowledge, Fe 200, 171 77 Stockholm, Sweden

Tel: +46(0)8-524 84 170 | E-mail: carina.ahlberg@ki.se

ORCID iD: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9946-6609>

To cite this article:

Ahlberg, C, MOOCs at Karolinska Institutet University Library, *Insights*, 2014, 27(2), 160–165; DOI:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1629/2048-7754.116>