



ESTEEM PROJECT FINAL REPORT

Project Title: Creative Climate
Your name: Dr. Joe Smith
Report Submission Date: 25th July 2012

Names of any key staff associated with the project: assisted by OU AL Susan Fawssett, and Staff Tutor (MCT) Christine Pearson

Contact Point: Dr Joe Smith, Geography

Executive Summary

Creative Climate is a long-term online environmental communications initiative that gathers accounts of people's understanding and action on environmental change issues. These accounts have been drawn together in TV, radio and web media, all of it appearing on the OU's main public service site OpenLearn. This report covers both the achievements of the project as a whole and the work supported by ESTEEM & EDIS over the last 18 months that has been more focused on sharing resources across the OU learning system.

The project is inspired by considering what the pioneers of the Mass Observation movement would have made of environmental change issues and the Internet. Mass Observation (still ongoing) catalysed the documentary movement and transformed public and professional understanding of the social sciences in Britain. This feels like a similar moment of opportunity at the point where scholars, media and public meet. This is a territory that the OU's social scientists and media commissioners might be expected to lead in.

Unusually we can afford to take a decade long approach to building the project because the materials are being used in OU modules that will last that long. Creative Climate offers a space within which to experiment with new practices made possible by digital scholarship. It grew out of a conviction that there are some deep failings in the dominant ways in which environmental issues are being communicated, as well as some great opportunities opening up with the web to address these.

For the OU the project offers an opportunity to experiment with the blending of broadcast and web-based content and the holding of professionally produced and user-generated content side-by-side. Another side-benefit is that it offers a chance to test new ways of holding qualitative data 'in public'. One of the goals is to express interdisciplinary environment and development research and policy as unfolding processes rather than a body of finished results. We think this helps to take some of the unproductive conflict out of, for example the 'climate wars'.

Creative Climate was commissioned as a means of piloting the thinking expressed in the 2009 Open University Broadcast Strategy Review. That review concluded that the OU must find means of splicing together investments in broadcast, learning and outreach more effectively. The project remains the only initiative within the University that has sought to do this on a substantial scale in one area of the curriculum. Its innovations have included:

- The first OU-initiated commissions on BBC World Service (9x28 mins) and BBC World TV (6x28mins), with advertisers accepting viewing figs of 70m on the TV transmissions in those slots

- Use of full OU/BBC co-production broadcasts directly in OU modules (for the first time on this scale since 2000)
- The first combined professional and public posting of content on openlearn (including over 200 video items produced via micro-commissioning on a budget of £70k)
- Micro commissioning of web video shorts by students at leading film schools. These sit on three web platforms and also in use in an OU module.
- Piloting of a shared teaching resources site for the whole OU teaching community (held on the VLE)

Aims and scope of your project

Externally the project is designed to make a distinctive contribution to environmental understanding and debate. However of most interest to OU colleagues are its internal goals:

- Cost efficiency: make broadcasts work in teaching
- Increase quality and dynamism of modules – easy updates via web resources
- Reduce workload – resources shared across a programme area
- Develop sense of community among OU learners & teachers
- Engage prospective students and enhance links with alumni
- Enhance OU reputation and presence in the environmental field
- Link to offer of free environment learning content to express OU leadership

Activities

What we've achieved online

- 200+ video and audio diaries commissioned in pilot phase
- Stable web platform: post moderation; creative commons
- Online content in use on OU modules & Open Educational Resources
- Commissioned 10 x 2.5 minute short films from top UK film students

What we've achieved in broadcast

- 10 x 30 mins BBC World Service radio: the Climate Connection (2009; 2010)
- 6 x 30 mins BBC World TV Earth Reporters (2009; 2011)
- 5 of the TV shows to be used in full in teaching – good for budget & quality
- 70 million global viewers at first TV transmissions (30m+ in later TXs)
- OU direct URL link at end of TV broadcasts

A full listing of the outputs appears in the appendix.

Use in OU modules

Digital Film School T156 offers making a diary as one of two assessment choices. It also uses the making of a diary as the core of a piece of learning content.

Environment: Journeys through a changing world, U116: diaries used to supplement module materials and in final TMA

Environment DST206: films, short films & diaries used in the module

International development: making sense of a changing world (TD223) film, diaries & short films used in the module

Changing Cities D837 (MA level) film and diary used in module

Several modules currently in development also anticipate drawing on the Creative Climate content, including the 2013 production of a new Oceanography module (which will use two of the BBC World Earth Reporters films)

Finally, the ESTEEM/EDIS supported work on Creative Climate allowed us to design and build an intranet website (on the VLE: <http://learn3.open.ac.uk/course/view.php?name=EDIS-RESOURCES>) that supports the OU environment teaching community across the environment area, from ALs delivering modules to module teams making new modules. This is a pilot site. We anticipate that it will be of generic value to the OU as it develops a more qualifications oriented approach, but emphasise its pilot status, and the need for on-going resource for it to fulfil its potential.

Responding to challenges

The project has worked at institutional boundaries in a period of substantial change: in the curriculum, in online presence and broadcast activity, and in personnel as well as policies and strategies. All of these have presented substantial challenges. Our approach has been challenging for some procedures and personnel who hold to a fixed notion of how things are to be done, but we feel the achievements more than justify our approach, and offer some valuable pointers regarding future working for the OU at the broadcast/outreach/learning interface.

We believe that our work confirms not just the intellectual benefits of protecting and nurturing the OU's uniquely strong position in terms of interdisciplinary working, but also the efficiency gains. We conclude that the sense of a drift towards more faculty-focused working around environment (and other interdisciplinary fields) carries both quality and financial costs.

What data and evidence

With modest resources of time and money, and given that the core purpose of the work was to improve and find efficiencies in OU teaching content we drew upon the most powerful form of review that the OU has within easy reach: open peer review in the module team context. The fact that so many modules across three faculties are drawing on the content confirms its fitness for purpose.

In terms of the specific work of the ESTEEM/EDIS project we carried out a desk study and email exchanges to establish environment related multimedia asset needs across environment courses in the three supporting faculties. This study includes both cross faculty (the old 'u' designation) modules as well as faculty-based modules. Modules range from foundation level through to Masters. We also ran an interactive workshop at the 2011 EDIS workshop to test our approach with fifty colleagues from across the OU.

We have also conducted a study of available AV resources to build a pool of shared resources in the environment area to take forward our discussions with module teams. These include diaries hosted on the Creative Climate Open Learn pages and BBC radio and TV content over the last 50 years. Together these

assets give rise to an extensive and rich pool of readily accessible resources for which rights have largely been cleared for use within the OU teaching and research systems.

We have developed a number of topic based case studies which demonstrate how these multimedia assets can be embedded in teaching to meet learning outcomes across module levels. Examples include Biofuels and the Animal and Human Health interface.

Findings

These questions have been addressed under challenges and data sections.

Impact

These questions have been addressed under other sections or are not directly relevant.

List of deliverables

The deliverables take the form of the website:

<http://learn3.open.ac.uk/course/view.php?name=EDIS-RESOURCES>

and the body of web, audio and video assets that are listed in full in the appendix A.

APPENDIX A

Find below fuller details of the different kinds of content generated in the course of the project. The body of audio and video assets are held on the OU systems and/or we have full rights to use in teaching. They have all been made with an eye on student and teacher needs although they have all been made for general public viewing. It is of interest I think that in working with BBC World TV and BBC World Service we have discovered that their cultures and editorial needs are quite close to ours in the OU. These series are the first instances of the OU working on this scale with these bodies. The producers have also been very attentive to academic ideas and concerns. Note also that we been provided with versions of the audio that are not so 'date sensitive' to allow use in teaching, and also extras in terms of extended interviews with contributors to the programmes (both audio and video). All the audio and video is described as 30 mins long although they all vary slightly, and are usually slightly under 30 mins. All have transcripts already provided.

VIDEO: 6 x 30 min films first shown on BBC World.

One standalone from 2009:

Hope in a Changing Climate

<http://www.open2.net/hopeinachangingclimate/index.html>

A positive story from China and two African countries of soil restoration. Three locations, and only developing world scientists and policy people on screen. Also the voices of local communities whose life chances are being positively transformed by these initiatives.

Five from the Earth Reporters strand available at:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/openlearn/whats-on/ou-on-the-bbc-earth-reporters>

Earth Reporters: My City and Your City

Episode one: St Louis Senegal is the former colonial capital of West Africa; an Atlantic gem in the style of the great Creole cities. Climate change impacts and adaptation story relevant to planning, built environment and governance. Footage from Senegal and comparative material from Mexico.

Earth Reporters: Sea Change

Episode two: Tasmania-based Earth Reporter, Dr Susan Wijffels is one of a handful oceanographers worldwide piecing together crucial new insights into the way the oceans work. Senior oceans scientist leads Argo buoy programme - this oceans monitoring network is explained and the kit demonstrated, but also global science governance and the science - policy join are illustrated.

Earth Reporters: Beating Plague

Episode three: Dr Dickens Chibeu works at the inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources based in Nairobi. He tells the story of his 30-year campaign to

eradicate Rinderpest that seriously affects livestock. Engaging and positive story from Africa about ecosystem based public health governance approach that has worked where a nation based approach could not.

Earth Reporters: Burning Questions in the Freezing Cold

Episode four: Dr Victoria Hill invites us to join in on her expedition to a special research base on the Arctic ice. Hill is a young woman scientist studying changes in sea ice. Vivid sense of what it is to 'do' science, particularly in tough conditions. Data gathering, reflections on write up, reflections on personal responsibility to the findings.

Earth Reporters: Damming the Mekong

Episode five: Thitarat Sriwattanapong takes us on a trip down the Mekong River and introduces us to the people who earn their livelihoods on it. Thitarat is a young female PhD student from Thailand who is looking at the likely impacts of prospective damming of the Mekong in a poor region of Laos. Striking how Laos would be providing for the western style energy consumption in Bangkok. There are underlying themes that need drawing out in wraparound teaching but another engaging case study of a much wider theme.

AUDIO: 9 x 30 min programmes aired on BBC World Service

Those from 2009 are interesting, but the most useful for teaching purposes are the five from December 2010 which explore the contributions different areas of social science / economics / psychology can make to responding to the question: 'What's stopping us from taking action on climate change?; Can research from other fields help us find solutions where conventional thinking around environmentalism might have failed? The last part of the Climate Connection explores some of the ideas we've heard throughout the series in an audience discussion with experts in the fields of economics, psychology, leadership and environmentalism.'

The final Debate programme (social scientists, an architect and a policy specialist debate - recorded at Walton Hall) is here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00c4pmk> and the other four are here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00c1stv>

SHORT FILMS: In the wake of a film competition open to the UK's leading film schools (Skillset academies) we have commissioned 10 short films. These have just gone up on the OU's Youtube channel. There is a wide range of approaches and tones - comedy, animation, drama, factual. Almost all are 2.5 mins long; two slightly shorter. Several would make very useful starting points for synchronous or asynchronous discussion of the themes they address, or just solo student activities. There are interesting differences of approach, reference and discourse that in themselves could provide the basis of an activity. There are blog entries on each of the ten films and a fuller introduction at

<http://citizenjoesmith.wordpress.com/2011/11/24/ten-creative-climate-short-films-launched/>

The briefs invited students to engage wider audiences in themes of risk; consumption; population; design and ecology/economy, and themselves may offer useful teaching reference points.

OTHER RESOURCES: DIARY ENTRIES:

Some of the diary postings are being used directly in modules. Do browse at www.open.ac.uk/creativeclimate - we have 200 diary entries across a wide thematic and geographic spread, and the idea is that we'll be encouraging diarists to update their material over time. In future we hope to have the resources to do this in a focused way, but for now we are pleased that the diaries are already finding a role in teaching and learning.

STUDENTS AS DIARISTS:

There is also the potential for students to use the diary principle within modules, with students holding e.g. a piece of text responding to e.g. the questions we've developed as prompts within the Creative Climate site. There are a small number of examples of students doing this e.g. from the Digital Film School module and U116 Environment.

BBC ARCHIVE

Although not directly part of the Creative Climate project over the same period the Director of the project has also led a case study that is pathfinding in the way the OU and BBC might work with the archive. The archive work has direct correspondence with the goals of Creative Climate in terms of its potential to draw together collaboration with broadcasters. Environment is one of two themes that have been piloting new approaches to public access to the BBC's archives. Joe Smith and George Revill (Geography) have been working with a freelancer (Kim Hammond) to select fifty hours (over 100 programmes) that are representative of a mix of themes, genres and media (TV and radio). These have been tagged and described by Kim. These are already available on the OU library's videofinder facility from within the Intranet. They are almost all be free to use without further rights clearances so long as usage is by OU students and staff. We understand that in future the interface will improve and also be available for students to access – in the longer term wider publics too.