

Keynote address 3: Wednesday, 7 December 2005**Community dimensions of learning object repositories**

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Abstract/synopsis

Increasing availability of learning object repositories offers a vision of a future in which reusable resources (or learning objects) could comprise a new currency of exchange within a learning economy. Learning objects, produced by publishers, teachers, support staff and students themselves, could be stored in digital repositories, where they could be easily accessed, re-combined and re-used within online courses. Despite this vision, the idea of sharing and re-using electronic resources has proved more complex than the object economy scenario might suggest. The literature points to cultural and social inhibitors to re-use (Campbell et al., 2001; Campbell, 2003) and some researchers have suggested the sharing of digital resources within communities as a potential solution (Littlejohn, 2003; Koper, 2004; Kester et al., in print).

A key factor lies in the relationship between repositories and communities: diverse types of communities will form around different collections of resources (Littlejohn, Nicol & Margaryan, 2005). The types of community using a repository might depend on the learning objects available, the context of use and the organisation of the repository. Other important considerations include the ways in which repositories are used by communities of teachers and learners to support learning (ALT-SURF, 2004; Nicol et al., 2005).

This keynote presentation will identify issues inhibiting the development of a learning object economy by analysing the relationships between repositories and communities. It will outline potential solutions to these problems identified by curators of a number of learning object repositories. Finally, it will examine possible future directions in the use of learning object repositories to support learning processes.

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