

NEWS FROM:



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OpenContent Directory to put UCT knowledge resources within everybody's reach

**OpenCourseWare Consortium President Steve Carson will speak
at the launch of UCT's OpenContent Directory: Friday 12 February 2010, 15h00, Mafeje
Room, Bremner Building, Lovers Walk, UCT Middle Campus**

For more information, please contact: Ray Hartle 021 650 5674

The University of Cape Town's OpenContent Directory is scheduled to go live at 15h00 on Friday, 12 February 2010. The OpenContent Directory will allow easy, free, online access to a selection of UCT's teaching and learning resources, as a first step towards developing OpenUCT – a far-reaching initiative that will eventually make a range of UCT's knowledge resources – including research – available to anyone with Internet access.

"Launching the OpenContent Directory is a significant step towards making UCT's African knowledge more accessible to the world," says Dr Max Price, Vice-Chancellor of UCT. "The open movement is already giving Africans easier access to knowledge from the world's top universities. UCT's OpenContent directory will enhance this endeavour by contributing South African resources to the global Knowledge Commons. I congratulate all involved in implementing this. As the OpenContent directory comes onstream, our continent's valued participation in global affairs will accelerate and our continent and the world will be the better for it."

Funded by the Shuttleworth Foundation and developed as part of the Open Educational Resources Project in the Centre for Educational Technology (CET), the directory will showcase UCT's collection of open educational resources. The subsequent development of the broader OpenUCT initiative will increase the institution's participation in the global open research, teaching and social responsiveness environment.

"Through this initiative, the university will provide a global platform for the rich body of research and knowledge that is coming out of Africa," says Professor Jo Beall, a Deputy Vice-Chancellor at UCT. "Open content initiatives also enable universities across Africa to establish an online connection to a wealth of resources from other continents: teaching materials, research findings, articles and statistics. These materials from prestigious universities like MIT were previously out of reach because they were only available to those who could afford to pay for published materials. Today you don't even have to be part of a university to access open content – anybody can log in."

CET Associate Professor Cheryl Hodgkinson-Williams says that making such materials available outside of academic circles will help create a culture of lifelong learning in South Africa. "Institutions like UCT are paid for by taxpayers, but until now, most South African taxpayers have not had the benefit of the knowledge that is produced at universities," she says. "Through the OpenContent Directory and OpenUCT, learning and knowledge sharing will become something anyone can participate in. Researchers and educators will be able to share their findings, build on each other's work and create a wider, more comprehensive body of world knowledge. And people outside of the academic campus will be able to look up information just as freely."

The launch of the OpenContent directory is one way of putting into effect Dr Price's vision of UCT as an Afropolitan university, by making African content available globally.

Historically, academic knowledge has been available only through published materials. As a result, academics in Africa have been largely dependent on books from the USA or Europe, where publishers could print for a bigger market at a lower cost. "But African researchers and teachers have important perspectives on subjects as diverse as economics and art, health and climate change," said Professor Beall. "UCT's OpenContent Directory is a starting point for putting Africa's contributions into the global body of knowledge."

Background on OpenContent

UCT has joined the international Open-Courseware Consortium – a collaboration of more than 200 higher education institutions and organisations around the world that are using a shared model to create a body of open educational content. The mission of the OpenCourseWare Consortium is to advance education and empower people worldwide by making knowledge and information more freely available online.

Some of the key OER developers in higher education:

- MIT, USA (<http://ocw.mit.edu/>)
- Open Learn, UK (<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/>)
- Rice University's Connexions, USA (<http://cnx.org/>)
- Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, USA (<http://ocw.jhsph.edu/>)
- Tufts University, USA (<http://ocw.tufts.edu/>)
- Open Yale, USA (<http://oyc.yale.edu/>)
- Carnegie Mellon University, USA (<http://oli.web.cmu.edu/openlearning/>)
- University of Tokyo, Japan (<http://ocw.u-tokyo.ac.jp/english/>)

- University of Keio, Japan (<http://ocw.dmc.keio.ac.jp/about.html>)

- Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico (<http://khub.itesm.mx/en>)

What are open educational resources?

Open educational resources (OER) refers to an Internet-driven, worldwide community effort through which educational resources can be accessed free of charge. OER include:

- Learning content: syllabi, full courses, modules, learning objects, lecture notes, presentation and data collections.
- Tools: content development tools, online learning communities, and software to support the creation, delivery, use and improvement of open learning content.

- Implementation resources: intellectual property licenses to promote open publishing of resources and guidelines for design and best practice.

Effective use of OER has the potential to help individual academics:

- Boost their individual, departmental and institutional profiles.
- Facilitate increased and effective community engagement.
- Enhance current teaching practice.
- Provide a means of archiving and curating teaching materials.
- Provide channels for receiving feedback on teaching materials from peers across the globe.
- Enhance individual contribution to the global knowledge Commons and facilitate better localised sharing of knowledge.

UCT OER resources do not:

- Provide a UCT qualification.
- Provide access to UCT faculty.
- Necessarily reflect the full course structure of listed resources.

Future OpenUCT resources could include:

- All research output which can be shared.
- Policy briefs, factsheets, online books, manuals, etc.
- Electronic dissertations and theses.
- Teaching resources which lecturers wish and able to share (incl. notes, presentations, PowerPoint files, multimedia, etc.)
- Materials developed by UCT academic departments and SHAWCO for use by community members and school children.
- Informal media outputs such as interviews, newspaper articles, etc.
- Archived material such as maps, diaries and uniquely African content.

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