



***HEFCE/The Higher Education Academy/JISC Open Educational Resources Programme:***

***Subject Strand: The HumBox Project Funding Award***

## **Report 3: tracking the use of HumBox OERs**

Date: May, 2011

Author: Kate Borthwick

HumBox tracking report 3, May 2011, K.Borthwick

## HumBox tracking report 3:

### Introduction:

The HumBox is an online space for the publication, sharing and managing of digital humanities resources. It is also the hub of a community of humanities professionals who are engaged in re-using and reviewing each other's resources and making connections with each other through the HumBox system.

The site's creation is the result of a collaboration between four HEA humanities Subject Centres (Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies; English; History, and Philosophy and Religious Studies) and a consortium of 10 partners in Humanities Departments, Schools and Research Centres in a range of institutions, as well as relevant Subject Associations. The HumBox project was funded under the JISC/HEA OER programme. That project ended in April, 2010, and since that time, the community of users on the HumBox has sustained the site.

### Activities since the last tracking report (Dec 2010):

- The HumBox Impact survey was published and distributed to all registered users of HumBox. 55 responses were received.
- Interviews with HumBox users have been conducted by email and skype to explore use of HumBox resources
- Members of the HumBox team have presented their work at conferences and meetings: including at the *SHARE National workshop*, March 16, 2011, Nottingham Trent University; the conference '*Language Learning and Teaching: Future Routes*', Coventry University, March 16th, 2011; '*Digital Impacts: How to Measure and Understand the Usage and Impact of Digital Content*,' 20<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Oxford University, and at internal, academic research group meetings at the University of Southampton.
- The HumBox team have continued to publicise the site and the project at Subject Centre and other events, including the LLAS annual workshop for new staff, April 15th, 2011, Jesus College, University of Oxford. The core user group (from the original project) continue to promote usage of the HumBox within their institutions and use the site themselves to publish their own work or as a tool in their research and teaching.

### Methods employed for tracking usage of HumBox:

- Monitoring of the humbox.ac.uk website itself.
- Tracking through GoogleAnalytics
- Data-mining 'through the back door' of HumBox.
- Short questionnaire. A short, online questionnaire has been sent out to all HumBox users (both new and 'core').
- Interviews with HumBox users to create mini-case studies for HumBox resources.

### Findings:

#### *Findings: usage of HumBox – tracking data*

Data from GoogleAnalytics (Appendix A) and from HumBox shows a healthy increase in the number of registered users (+77) since the last tracking report. There has also been 20 new resources deposited in this time. This constant steady increase means that the number of registered users on the site has more than

trebled since the launch of the site in February, 2010. This indicates ongoing, voluntary interest in the HumBox and implicit support of its aims and ethos.

Compared to the last reporting period, there was a slight decrease in the number of pageviews of the site, but numbers remain extremely buoyant at 41,554; and there was an increase in the number of unique visitors to the site (+1838). Visitors come from a wide range of countries (134) and from an increasingly wide range of mediums, mostly via Google or direct entry. The presence in the top ten sources of visitors from the search engines, Google, Yahoo and Bing; of the social networking site Facebook and the UK national repository, Jorum, indicate that HumBox and its resources are becoming easier to find and are being referred to in commonly used websites. This indicates that the site continues to be popular and is reaching an ever-wider audience.

Recent deposits to the site were made by HumBox users of long-standing indicating a continuing interest and relationship with the site. There are also recent deposits from new users. A total of 20 new resources have been deposited in this reporting period.

Out of the top five most popular resources (directly viewed URL), 3 out of 5 remain the same as in the last reporting period which is a testament to those resources' discoverability and appeal to the community. The most viewed resource 'American Pop Culture 3.2' ([www.humbox.ac.uk/2313](http://www.humbox.ac.uk/2313)) was in second position during the last reporting period and so remains durably popular – no doubt due to it being linked to from an educational institution in the USA. This indicates continuing but limited strong engagement with the site from the USA.

The resource 'A History of Logic' (previously 'The Logic Gallery') which proved wildly popular in the last reporting period, now appears in 4<sup>th</sup> position and has registered markedly fewer views than previously (down from 3107 to 181). This seems to be due to a change in the way the creator of this resource presents his material in an attempt to realise commercial gain from it. [See below for the case history of this resource].

If GA data is analysed over the time period from the launch of the HumBox site on 26 February, 2010, to now, it can be seen that certain resources have been persistently popular. Interviews with the creators of these resources suggest that the reason for their continuing popularity is that they are actively used in teaching, either by direct reference to the resource in HumBox, or referred to in class and then sought out by students working independently. Depositors made clear from an early stage in the creation and use of HumBox that it would be tool for publishing material for their students to use, particularly videoed material. This is borne out by the fact that half of the top 8 most viewed resources are indeed videoed material. [See below for case histories on selected resources].

#### *Findings: survey and interviews*

An online survey was distributed to all registered users of the HumBox, publicised through the HumBox project network and posted on the front page of the HumBox site. The survey was live for about 4 months and had 55 respondents. It has yielded interesting and positive results which support the tracking data on ongoing activity and site-usage described above.

It is heartening to note that the most popular way that users have found out about HumBox was from 'the recommendation of a colleague' (30.9%). This indicates that

knowledge of and ownership of the HumBox site is moving beyond the original core project group. Of those who have registered for an account, more than half (50.9%) have uploaded resources, which is a positive sign that users are attracted to the site, understand its ethos and feel encouraged to participate in an active way by sharing their teaching materials. Similarly, more than half of respondents (51.9%) indicated that they had downloaded and saved HumBox resources for their own use. This is a pleasingly high number given that HumBox's preview screen gives immediate accessibility to a resource without the need to download it. However, when asked if respondents had used any HumBox resources directly in their own teaching, the majority (78.2%) had not. This seems to indicate that users are discovering and downloading resources to keep for future use, development or interest rather than with a specific and immediate teaching purpose in mind.

Of those who responded that they had used HumBox resources directly in their own teaching, 50% noted that they had downloaded and edited the resource for their own context. It is this kind of activity that the OER movement hopes to encourage on a wider scale, but our survey data indicates that within the HumBox community, editing and repurposing is still at a fledgling stage. A small sample within the main group of respondents indicated that they have sent students directly to HumBox to look at resources in situ (20.7% in class, and 24.1% for independent study).

When questioned about the nature of the resources users were uploading to the HumBox, 43.9% of respondents indicated that their resources had been used previously with students (i.e were 'tried-and-tested'). However, a significant proportion of respondents (39%) indicated that such resources had neither been used, nor were intended to be used (in this academic year). This suggests that users may be sharing fresh, experimental materials or materials that have been created and not used, but would otherwise have been locked away in their computer. This is a positive sign that perhaps HumBox users are embracing the ethos of the site, and are keen to share teaching and learning materials of all kinds, and also that users are engaging with the site as discipline professionals, intent to make an impact through the materials they have created either recently or in the past.

### *Reasons for using HumBox*

The survey asked respondents to indicate why they used HumBox and how they perceived its usefulness. A summary of their responses is listed below:

- to see what other institutions and practitioners are doing
- to share practice on standard aspects of learning e.g. study skills
- can find useful resources to adapt for own students
- helps practitioners reflect on their own teaching
- a good way to get ideas to improve/enhance one's own practice by seeing new/innovative ways of presenting material
- a good way of keeping up with developments in the discipline
- good for early career researchers to demonstrate teaching experience and communicate research work
- opportunity to see things from the perspective of other humanities disciplines

Respondents noted a wide variety of examples of how HumBox resources had inspired or influenced their work, causing them to create new material, understand new methods or adapt their existing resources e.g:

*“How to use online dialect resources, I would have found this difficult to do myself, [as I’m] not as technically advanced.”*

*“The Goethe podcast (such as resource 739)...a text in German, read by a German native speaker with a translation. After seeing this, I produced the same sort of exercise for French politics.”*

*“I have used a ppt on sociolinguistics as a springboard to design resources which are relevant to my students.”*

*“The recorded lectures of English History were very interesting and are making me think that I need to do the same. The resources with Articulate have also caught my attention as they look extremely professional and very suitable for dissemination to wider audiences. The Hull Fair collection has given me ideas for my work. Also, some of the simplest resources, for instance a set of questions for discussions in seminars or film analysis (English), or pictures of historic sites or symbols (French) helped me to reflect upon my own teaching and I have used more these strategies.”*

Feedback such as this indicates that HumBox is being used in dynamic and interesting ways to support teaching practice, and that cross-disciplinary sharing is also taking place. Users clearly seem to find the site a generally rich source of ideas and resources.

*The comments feature: data from survey*

Tracking shows that the use of the ‘comments’ feature in HumBox continues to be underused, with no new comments put on resources during the reporting period. The use of this feature is still in infancy and although there are a considerable number of comments on resources (details in tracking report 2), they are largely confined to the original HumBox project team. Data from the survey complements the finding that use of the comments feature is not common practice: a majority of those who responded to the question indicated that they had not made any comments/reviews on any HumBox resources (80%) and similarly, only 28.9% noted that another user had made a comment on *their* resources.

However, where comments have been made on a resource, survey respondents indicated that they found such comments to be useful and have modified the resource by, for example, checking hyperlinks, adding to the description field, or editing the resource in a minor way, e.g.

*“I enhanced the format of a video I had uploaded following feedback that its file size was restricting access and use.”*

Another respondent noted:

*“I have polished up the resource if needed and I have also engaged in discussion and further dissemination. Given the success of one of them, I presented it for an award, which I managed to obtain!”*

These kinds of responses point to the usefulness of the feature within HumBox and how it can have a positive impact on teaching practice.

## Case Histories of HumBox resources

### 1. A History of Logic [www.humbox.ac.uk/2192](http://www.humbox.ac.uk/2192)

This resource was added to the HumBox on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2010, just after the HumBox project finished. It is a book and was initially called 'The Logic Gallery' (a name it retained until June 2011). It comes top of a google search conducted under its former name, but not under its new name. The resource was added by a professor of philosophy in the USA, and is one of three resources that he has deposited in HumBox. Data indicates that this resource is by far the most popular on HumBox, in terms of views and downloads.

The depositor engaged with HumBox as an experiment: he was keen to see whether users found his resources on HumBox and whether it would be a way of promoting his work. It immediately seemed as if HumBox *was* a way of publicising his resources, as statistics on his profile page indicated that the resource was being heavily viewed (see Appendix A). He found this to be pleasing but noted:

*"I've never (**never once** [sic]) had any feedback from any who has viewed or download LG. Strikes me as quite odd."*

Nonetheless, given the traffic that the resource seemed to be getting on HumBox, the depositor decided to try and realise some income from the resource. He replaced the resource on HumBox with a small extract and an indication of where the book could be purchased in full. The book has been made available online through a print-on-demand site and is linked from another UK website <http://evans-experientialism.freewebspace.com/marans01.htm>. To date, he has not sold any copies of The Logic Gallery to people other than his own students (such royalties are donated to charity). This is a situation he finds

*"disappointing...It was more gratifying when several thousand took it gratis off Humbox."*

He has made no other attempts to publicise his resources beyond the website mentioned above and has no intention of removing or altering his other HumBox resources (one of which is also highly popular). The Logic Gallery will remain online as a purchasable resource in the immediate future.

### 2. Case History: The Case of Lorca: video on regional autonomy in Spain, video 16 [www.humbox.ac.uk/1646](http://www.humbox.ac.uk/1646)

This video was added on 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2010 and is part of a collection of 17 videos covering the topic of regional autonomy in Spain. It was deposited by a senior lecturer in Spanish at Leeds University, who was part of the original HumBox project team. Data indicates that this resource is one of the most viewed on HumBox. Further investigation reveals that its popularity is due to its integration in the depositor's teaching and other professional activities this year.

The depositor directs his own students to the videos to use in independent study, and he focuses on certain elements during lectures to draw out linguistic points of learning. He also links to the video collection from his institutional publications page. This is reflected in the healthy viewing statistics for each video. However, video #16 has had more attention than the others and this is because it became the focus of an outreach activity to language students in Liverpool as part of a student conference on Luso-Hispanic identities. The activity involved student preparation of a learning activity revolving around video #16, and then active practice during the conference.

The depositor also created an assessed task related to the video (creating a newspaper article based on it) which tutors required students to do. In this way, the resource has become part of the teaching in an institution other than the depositor's own – and has offered ideas to other professionals on teaching methods and tasks. The collection of videos remains on HumBox as a resource for further use by Spanish teachers across the UK.

### **3. Case History: Video demonstrating plagiarism detection using the Turn It In online service <http://humbox.ac.uk/76/>**

This screencapture video was one of the first resources deposited on the HumBox site, on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2009. It was created by a learning technologist at the University of Warwick and it describes how the plagiarism detection software 'Turn it in' works. Although it registers comparatively fewer hits than the most popular resources in HumBox (it registers 1301), it is consistently flagged up by users as a highlighted resource. It also has the most comments of any HumBox resource.

The resource proved popular immediately and this can be seen from some of the comments placed on the resource:

*"This is one of the first resources that I integrated into the Study Skills unit with first year undergraduate students. Students thought that the video was useful to understand what plagiarism is and, crucially, how it can be detected. It triggered a good discussion about why and how we expect students to use and present their sources."*

*"I really appreciate you having posted this video on Humbox. I've linked it to a Facebook group site designed for our incoming first-year History students at Loughborough Uni. I emphasised to the students that we prefer that they stopped themselves from plagiarising rather than being caught in the act."*

The creator of the resource also received offline comments and compliments about it and made some changes to the metadata to enable others to understand the nature of the resource more easily. It continues to be a resource that is well-liked and appreciated. The creator noted that he found the experience of open publication and review so satisfying that he would like to apply this process to more of his work, and has recommended that a technical enhancement be made to HumBox, so that resources could be flagged up as 'needing review' in order to invite comment from colleagues. The amended resources would then be republished and would become pieces of collaborative work.

### **Conclusion:**

HumBox is a popular site that continues to grow slowly but steadily in numbers of resources and registered users. Users seem to find it to be a rich site for both resources and ideas and an intuitive and attractive place through which to share their own work. A smaller number of users are engaged in deeper activity in relation to HumBox's OERs, and are downloading, editing and repurposing resources, or commenting/reviewing the work of others. In so far as HumBox resources can be tracked 'in the wild', it is clear that they are being used in diverse ways both directly with students and to inform teaching practice indirectly.

The persistent popularity of HumBox and the kinds of activities reported by users of the site seem to clearly demonstrate the value of open access in higher education, and particularly in the humanities. The variety and range of activities reported by

HumBox users at all levels, from simply using the site as inspiration for ideas; to reviewing others' work; and then to actually downloading, re-using and re-publishing materials indicates that it is possible for open access to become an integrated part of academic practice. Indeed, this is already happening for many HumBox users. The experience of some users, for example case history 3, points to how the HumBox can facilitate collaborative work for the benefit of the whole sector. This is an area that the HumBox team hope to explore and develop.

The interesting history of the resource the 'Logic Gallery' raises some uncomfortable questions about the impact of open access on academic business models. Will it become harder for academics and researchers to market and sell their work and ideas through traditional routes? If you choose *not* to make your materials openly available, will they simply be ignored by a generation of students expecting everything to be open access? The Logic Gallery certainly seems to have a life when it is made openly available, but not when concealed behind a paywall. This situation and these issues will be monitored and explored further over time, by the HumBox team and the OER community at large.

The HumBox is currently being used in at least two separate projects and it will continue to evolve as a tool for the UK humanities teaching community, in response to feedback and user comments. Tracking of HumBox resources and research into how open access repositories serve their communities will also be ongoing as HumBox moves forward.

**Appendix A:** Data from GoogleAnalytics from the date of the last tracking report to today:

**Table 1: General HumBox access data**

	<b>From tracking report 1 to report 2: 9th Sept – 17 Dec 2010</b>	<b>From tracking report 2 to now: 17 Dec 2010 – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2011</b>	Totals since launch of site 26th Feb 2010
New registered users	69	77	467
Number of live 'resources' deposited*	33	20	1,379
Unique views of the HumBox site	44,483	41,554	169,073
Number of countries yielding visitors to HumBox	122 Top five in descending order: UK (4,943), USA (2,871), Canada (299), Germany (180), Italy (162)	134 Top five in descending order: UK (6,956), USA (2,421), Canada (349), Portugal (255), Germany (241)	152 Top five: UK (18,787; USA (7,081); Czech Republic (907); Canada (816); Germany (673)
Number of unique visitors to site	8,223	10,061	26,756
Source of visitors	Visits came via 205 different sources or mediums (Google is top; direct entry 2 <sup>nd</sup> ; leiterreports.typepad.com – a philosophy blog is 3 <sup>rd</sup> ; JorumOpen is 4 <sup>th</sup> )	Visits came via 315 different sources or mediums (Google is top; direct entry 2 <sup>nd</sup> ; www.kclibrary.lonestar.edu is 3 <sup>rd</sup> ; Yahoo is 4 <sup>th</sup> ; <a href="http://www.llas.ac.uk">www.llas.ac.uk</a> is 5 <sup>th</sup> )	Visits came via 566 different sources or mediums (Google is top; direct entry 2 <sup>nd</sup> ; leiterreports.typepad.com – a philosophy blog is 3 <sup>rd</sup> ; blisty.cz, a Czech website is 4 <sup>th</sup> ; yahoo is 5 <sup>th</sup> )

\* A 'resource' in HumBox can consist of multiple files – so the number of resources deposited is not an accurate reflection of the number of files in the system which could be shared and re-used. Some resources have been put onto the site but not made live (i.e. only the creator can 'see' them).

**Table 2: Most viewed resources on HumBox during the reporting period, 17 Dec 2010 – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2011 (views by direct entry to their URL)**

	<b>Page views</b>
1. American Pop Culture 3.2 <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/2313">www.humbox.ac.uk/2313</a>	735
2. Using archives and libraries in the former Soviet Union <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/2614">www.humbox.ac.uk/2614</a>	298
3. National Fairground Archive Images: Living Wagons <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/689">www.humbox.ac.uk/689</a>	197
4. A History of Logic (The Logic Gallery)	181

<a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/2192">www.humbox.ac.uk/2192</a>	
5. Functionalism: an approach to mental states <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/212">www.humbox.ac.uk/212</a>	176

**Notes:**

Resources 1,4 and 5 all appeared in the list of the top five viewed resources in the last tracking report.

**Table 3: Most viewed resources on HumBox since its launch on 26 Feb, 2010 (views by direct entry to their URL)**

	Page views	Downloads**
1. A History of Logic (The Logic Gallery) <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/2192">www.humbox.ac.uk/2192</a>	4,211	3622
2. American Pop Culture 3.2 <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/2313">www.humbox.ac.uk/2313</a>	1,239	1065
3. National Fairground Archive Images: Living Wagons (collection) <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/689">www.humbox.ac.uk/689</a>	508	n/a***
4. A collection of historic drawings of Greece <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/1189">www.humbox.ac.uk/1189</a>	499	n/a***
5. Functionalism: an approach to mental states <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/212">www.humbox.ac.uk/212</a>	441	46
6. Video interview – Czech history <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/1924">www.humbox.ac.uk/1924</a>	398	255
7. The Case of Lorca: video on regional autonomy in Spain, video 16 <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/1646">www.humbox.ac.uk/1646</a>	393	4
8. National Fairground Archive Images: Transport <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/683">www.humbox.ac.uk/683</a>	381	n/a***

\*\* Download statistics provided by HumBox. WARNING: this download data is unreliable and should be read as indicative of activity on the site only

\*\*\* A collection cannot be downloaded – individual resources are downloadable

**Table 4: Most viewed resources on HumBox since its launch on 26 Feb, 2010 (data recorded by HumBox itself as hits on resource pages)**

	Page views
1. A History of Logic (The Logic Gallery) <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/2192">www.humbox.ac.uk/2192</a>	10,191
2. English: Roots and Routes <a href="http://humbox.ac.uk/482/">http://humbox.ac.uk/482/</a>	5,416

3. Attitudes towards Regional Autonomy in Spain: The Case of Lorca (Region of Murcia). Video 1 and Follow-up Video - Transcripts in English and Spanish - Summary of Methodology <a href="http://humbox.ac.uk/233/">http://humbox.ac.uk/233/</a>	4,695
4. American Pop Culture 3.2 <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/2313">www.humbox.ac.uk/2313</a>	3,579
5. The Case of Lorca: video on regional autonomy in Spain, video 16 <a href="http://www.humbox.ac.uk/1646">www.humbox.ac.uk/1646</a>	3,001