



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

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

## **Report 1: tracking the use of HumBox OERs**

Authors: Kate Borthwick, Alison Dickens

## **HumBox tracking report 1:**

### ***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.

### ***Activities since the end of the project:***

The project ended on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2010, and since that time, activity on the HumBox site has continued without cease. We have welcomed over 100 new registered users to the site and have been the means of publishing at least 226 new resources (see Appendix A). The HumBox team have continued to publicise the site and the project at Subject Centre events; 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; and Alison Dickens and Kate Borthwick (project director and manager, respectively) presented on 'HumBox and academic recognition' at the International OER Symposium, in London, 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2010. A search box which links directly to the HumBox as been embedded in the webpages of each of the participating Subject Centres in the project.

### ***Continuing methods for tracking usage of HumBox:***

- Monitoring of the humbox.ac.uk website itself. The site tells us how many users have registered; how many resources have been deposited or collections made, and gives an indication of the number of times resources have been viewed and downloaded.
- GoogleAnalytics. We currently use GA to monitor usage of the HumBox. This data gives us an overview of who is accessing the site, from where, how many people are looking at/using HumBox and which of the content seems to be most appealing. It is also useful in showing trends in user-activity over time, showing spikes in usage of the site and in representing data in a variety of ways. Monitoring general traffic on the site is important, as the HumBox features an excellent preview facility which allows users to access and use a resource without necessarily downloading the resource itself.

### ***Planned methods for in-depth tracking of HumBox OERs:***

- Data-mining 'through the back door' of HumBox

It is possible to extract a large amount of data from the ePrints/HumBox technical interface. Our technical team seek to improve our knowledge of how HumBox is used by mining the system to find out, for example, which resources are garnering the most reviews/comments; which users are most active in reviewing or remixing resources; which resources are being downloaded most frequently; and to get a

better idea of how many files, in total, are in the system (HumBox resources can comprise multiple files).

We need to do this to get an accurate picture of how users are engaging with OERs through the HumBox, but also to identify 'keystone' resources and 'super-users' of the site. We can then use this information to follow-up on particular users and resources to track methods of usage in detail.

- Short questionnaires

We plan to send out two short, online questionnaires to our core user community: one will be sent within the next two weeks (Sept 2010), and the other will be sent out in April 2011. The aim of these questionnaires is to find out how HumBox resources are being used by the humanities community and to get a sense of the impact on teaching and pedagogical practice engagement with OERs is having within the community. Results from these questionnaires will be compared to register any change over time, and to capture different moments in time. We also intend to target new users to HumBox with a similar questionnaire, in an attempt to find out how new users to OER and HumBox are engaging with the site and its resources, particularly as many keen new users are outside the UK. Communication with users will take place through the HumBox itself and through 'Basecamp,' the communications portal which was used during the HumBox project.

It is hoped that analysis of responses to these questionnaires will identify well-used resources, the diversity of ways resources may be used, and which of our HumBox users are keen and active. We will then be able to track and follow selected users and resources.

- Mini-case studies

Once we have received data from our questionnaires and data-mining activities, our intention is to track and follow-up on a selection of most viewed or popular resources to use as 'case studies' of how an OER is used 'in the wild' (some HumBox resources have been viewed thousands of times already). We aim to use the knowledge gained from these case studies to improve the HumBox site, and we are keen to include text and audio-visual versions of the mini case studies on the HumBox site to act as guidance to other HumBox users on how OERs can be used.

### **Conclusion:**

It is clear from ongoing monitoring of the HumBox website that people are active in using the site. They continue to upload resources and register as users and many more people are looking at the site, viewing and possibly downloading resources. We are aware that GoogleAnalytics gives a useful representation of activity on the HumBox website itself, but does not necessarily enable the detailed tracking of resources and how they may be being used. It is for this reason that we have decided to make use of questionnaires and collate mini case studies alongside technical data. All of these methods in concert will give a useful picture of how HumBox OERs are being used in the wider world.

## Appendix A:

Data from GoogleAnalytics from the end of project to today:

|   | <b>From end of project to now: 1st May 2010 – 9th September 2010</b>               | <b>Totals since launch of site 26th Feb 2010</b>                                   |
|---|--|--|
| New registered users                            | 101  | 321  |
| Number of 'resources' deposited*                | 226  | 1,326  |
| Unique views of the HumBox site                 | 25,920   | 56,941   |
| Number of countries yielding visitors to HumBox | 117<br>Ranked in descending order: UK, USA, Czech republic, Germany, Canada        | 134  |
| Number of unique visitors to site               | 5,660  | 9,185  |
| Source of visitors                              | Visits came via 229 different sources or mediums (Google is top; direct entry 2nd) | Visits came via 301 different sources or mediums (Google is top; direct entry 2nd) |

\* 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.