



Report: HumBox Impact Analysis

for the

JISC-funded HumBox Impact project

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HumBox Impact Analysis

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. It was created as part of the HumBox project, which was funded under the JISC/HEA OER programme and lead by the LLAS Subject Centre, based at the University of Southampton. That project ended in April, 2010, and since that time, the community of users on the HumBox has sustained the site.

The HumBox repository itself was created by a team within the School of Electronics and Computer Sciences, at the University of Southampton, and is a custom-designed version of ePrints for teaching and learning materials. The technical team behind the development of the site is leading the HumBox Impact project (JISC-funded) and will implement improvements to the site based on the results of the usage and impact analysis outlined below.

Methods employed for measuring impact and tracking usage in HumBox:

- Deployment of an online survey to all registered HumBox users, and made available on the HumBox home page.
- Online focus group-style meeting with users of HumBox to discuss usage, impact and improvements
- 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. 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.
- Data-mining 'through the back door' of HumBox. We have begun to mine the ePrints/HumBox technical interface for data for data on e.g. 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).

1. Impact and usage to date:

Findings: usage of HumBox – tracking data

Data from GoogleAnalytics (Appendix A) and from HumBox shows that the number of registered users has nearly trebled since the launch of the site in February, 2010 (+297). The majority of these new users (230) have joined the site since the end of the funded HumBox project, which indicates ongoing, voluntary interest in the HumBox.

The number of unique visitors to the site and pageviews of the site have increased considerably over the period since the launch of the HumBox (+12,432 and +66,802 respectively). Visitors come from a wide range of countries (147) and from a range of

mediums, mostly via Google or direct entry. This indicates that the site continues to be popular and is reaching an ever-wider audience.

The most recent deposits to the site (two days ago, at time of writing) were made by new members to the HumBox community and there have been 259 resources added since the end of the HumBox project. The total number of items in HumBox is actually far greater than the system cites – at approximately 2816. This figure differs from the number of cited resources, because some items may consist of several files, but under HumBox terminology, they would still be considered as one 'resource'. 341 items have been created but never published 'live.' It is not clear why users have chosen to do this, and this is an area which needs further investigation.

Usage of the comment/review feature

Analysis of the usage of the comment/review feature in HumBox indicates that use of the feature is still in its infancy. There are a considerable number (429) of comments in the system, but only on 341 resources, and such activity is largely confined to the original HumBox project team.

There are two resources which have both garnered six comments each, and both of them illustrate the purpose of reviewing in the context of OERs:

- /76/ is a screencapture video on plagiarism. Comments indicate where improvements might be made to the resource, but also how it has been used by others, e.g. one lecturer has integrated it into a first-year study skills course
- /469/ is an interactive online task. Initial comments on this resource flagged up problems with getting all the technical features to work, and this led to a response from the original depositor, which in turn allowed others to access the resource and suggest alternative ways that it could be used.

Commenting/reviewing OERs in HumBox is clearly an area which needs further exploration and development amongst the user community.

Findings: Survey data

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.

Commenting/reviewing

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. This complements tracking data mentioned above which shows that use of this facility in HumBox is not yet common practice. 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. One 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.

Anecdotal user activity:

HumBox continues to be integrated into the academic activities of its users and this is borne out by anecdotal evidence collected from HumBox users, for example:

- one user from Leeds University is actively using his Spanish video resources with students in this semester by sending them directly to the site to watch each resource in situ. He was recently asked to present about his work with HumBox and students at an event in Liverpool. He comments that in order to prepare for this, he reviewed the materials that he had shared on the site, polishing them further and adapting them to a new audience. He found this to be a useful activity in itself. His work in promoting HumBox "has led to an emphasis on 'creating to publish and share' at Leeds (in the context of learning and teaching)".
- Another user mentioned that HumBox is helpful for storing and sharing her resources when she presents at conferences. For example, she has collected all of her presentations and resources related to feedback in one HumBox collection, available online at www.humbox.ac.uk/2333. She gives the URL for this collection when she attends a conference so that attendees

can have immediate access to her work in this area (and so that she does not have to rely on paper copies or USB sticks). She has used this HumBox facility at several conferences this year. As a result of her work, she has been asked to write about how she uses HumBox in the Perspectives magazine, the publication of the Islamic Studies Network.

Reasons for using HumBox

The survey asked respondents to indicate what they liked about HumBox and why they used it. A summary of their responses is listed below:

What is good about HumBox?

- easy and intuitive
- open access
- variety of teaching materials included
- wealth of resources
- gives the opportunity to share good practice
- can adapt materials
- sense of community
- targeted at humanities community
- good presentation
- resources easy to download
- good quality materials

Why is HumBox useful?

- 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

Brief conclusion

HumBox is a popular site that continues to grow in numbers of resources and registered users. Users 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.

2. Suggestions for improvements to HumBox

Both the survey and the online meeting yielded useful recommendations for improvements to the HumBox site. They are summarised below:

- improve the 'search' functionality

Users reported that it was sometimes difficult to find resources which they knew existed on the site using the 'search' function. Also, when results are returned from a search, they are often prioritised inappropriately, and it was felt that the 'search' function could be improved to better reflect a user's search term.

- improve mechanisms to draw in new users/returning users

It was suggested that mail alerts could be set up to indicate when new resources were added; comments to your materials, and to convey other information to users (e.g. popular resources). Several users commented that they wanted the site to include more features which would encourage them to deposit resources, or help colleagues understand more immediately how the site could be useful to them. Users were keen for the site to grow by taking in more resources and also to expand access to open sharing sites for users by linking to other repositories. It was also felt that more interaction via a blog might encourage more engagement with the site.

- improve categorisation/metadata

A number of users commented that much of the metadata was inconsistently applied and often misleading (an outcome of HumBox's open approach to resource publication) and this could lead to problems in finding appropriate resources, or in trying to identify groups of similar resources.

- improve onsite advice and guidance

Users noted this in relation to repurposing and embedding OERs, making collections in HumBox and in understanding RSS feeds.

- improve presentation of statistical information

Several users felt that the site would have greater impact if download stats were more accurately implemented, and removed for collections.

- increase capacity of preview screen to deal with different formats, especially learning objects and other interactive resources

- improve the comment/review functionality

Although the comment/review facility is currently used in a limited way, users indicated that it is a useful feature with the potential for collaborative working cross-institution and impact on professional practice. Users suggested that resources could be tagged as 'awaiting review' and email alerts could request reviews. It was also noted that this feature should be promoted more through the home page.

- increase promotion of the site so that it attracts more users

3. Proposed development of HumBox

Based on the impact and usage analysis, there are two clear areas where further development of tools will improve the impact and sustainability of HumBox and its community: improving the tools support for finding and reusing/remixing resources, and secondly, improving the strength and binding of the community around the repository (its '*stickiness*') by creating more awareness of activity and opportunity for engagement.

The HumBox Impact team intend to:

- Develop a new advanced Search and Browse capability – for example, graphical, adaptive or faceted browsers for finding content in the growing collection.
- Develop a recommendation and/or similarity engine based on statistical and heuristic analysis, to automatically interlink content.

- Develop Remix and Reuse Tools. The survey shows that at the moment, reuse and remixing is at fledging stage, used by approximately 20% of members, but when users remix and reuse, interestingly, 60% report that they change and improve their pedagogic practice. This shows that remixing has benefits beyond simple re-use and is worth spending effort to improve support for it. We believe that we could increase remixing and reuse by providing support through in-browser tools and transparent reuse statistics. The new tools would provide more visible content evolution that would in turn encourage remix behaviour.
- Improve community awareness of repository activity. HumBox has an RSS feed capability which was intended to provide such an awareness, however, from our impact survey it is clear that our users find RSS technology difficult to understand and are not encouraged to use it. We can offer more information and guides to support its use but it may be better to take a different approach and instead look at how we can provide awareness in a fresh way, using technologies that are more familiar and understandable to more users.

RSS tools will remain available for those who want to use them and will continue to be used for inter-repository communication.

- If we have sufficient time we will look at improving comment and review capability, supported by the new awareness tools.

Appendix A: Data from GoogleAnalytics from the official launch of the HumBox to 21st February, 2011.

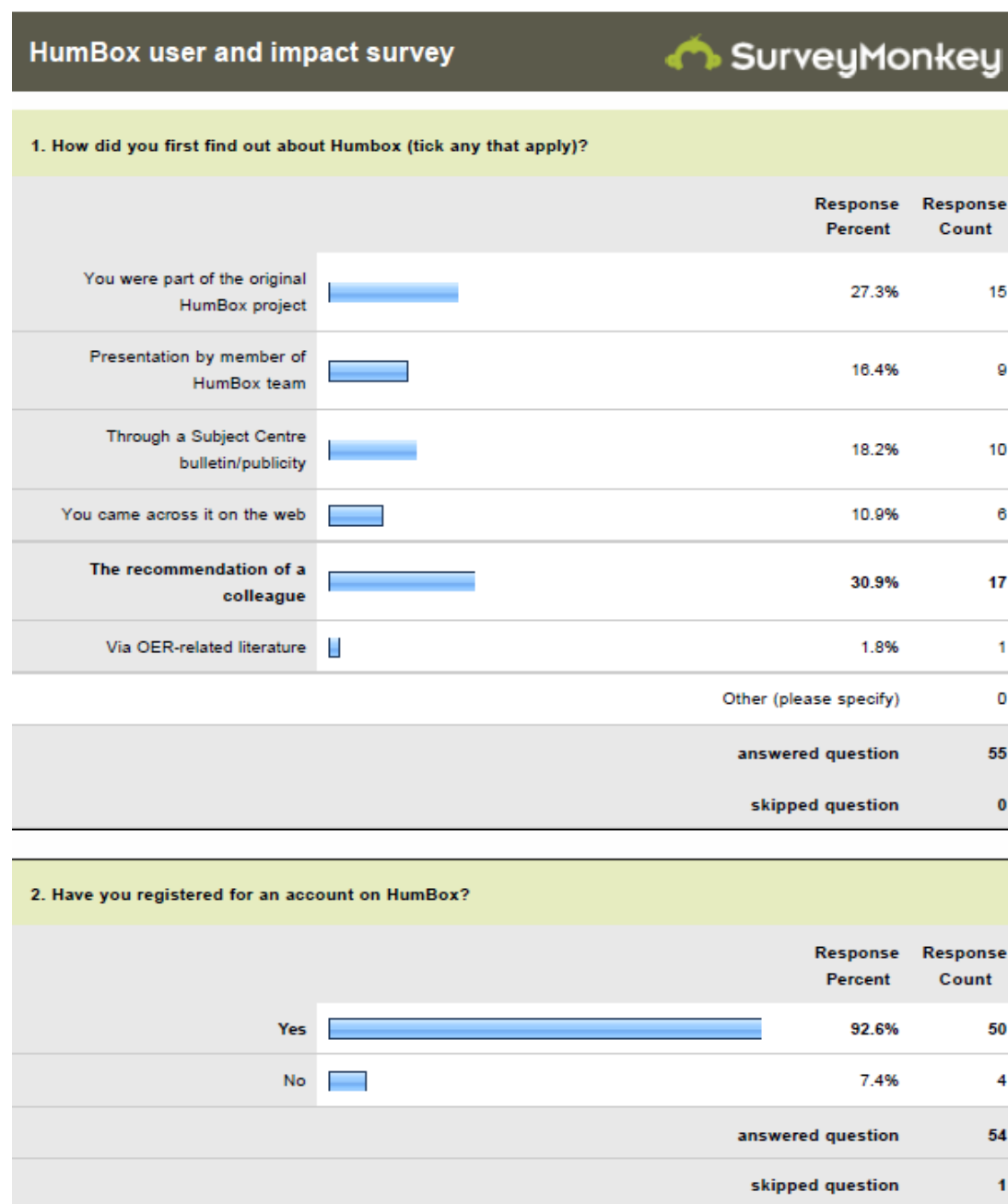
Table 1: General HumBox access data

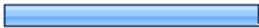

	Totals at official launch of HumBox (26 Feb 2010)	Totals to date since official launch of site
Number of registered users	153	450
Number of 'resources' deposited**	1,005	1,359
Unique views of the HumBox site	64,662	131,464
Number of countries yielding visitors to HumBox	131	147 Top five: UK (14,535); USA (5,258); Czech Republic (871); Canada (565); Germany (534)
Number of unique visitors to site	7,867	20,299
Source of visitors	66.33% search engines 17.51% referring sites 16.16% direct traffic Visits came via 150 different sources or mediums.	41.08% search engines 33.15% from referring sites 25.72% direct traffic Visits came via 442 different sources or mediums (Google is top; direct entry 2 nd ; leiterreports.typepad.com – a philosophy blog is 3 rd ; blisty.cz, a Czech website is 4th).






* The HumBox site was put online and used for the HumBox project from approximately August 2009. The site was used during the project by participants, and was actively promoted. It was officially launched for open use on 26th February, 2010.



** 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.




Appendix B: Humbox Impact Survey









3. If you have registered an account, have you uploaded any resources to the HumBox?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		50.9%	27
No		49.1%	26
answered question			53
skipped question			2



4. How would you describe your engagement with the HumBox site (tick one response):			
		Response Percent	Response Count
I've uploaded lots of resources and I often check the site		16.4%	9
I've uploaded a few resources and I occasionally check the site		38.2%	21
I've never uploaded anything to the site but I often browse the site		1.8%	1
I look for specific things on the site but don't spend much time there		12.7%	7
I have looked at the site a couple of times		30.9%	17
answered question			55
skipped question			0




5. Do you make use of the RSS feed to keep up to date with new uploads?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		5.5%	3
No		94.5%	52
answered question			55
skipped question			0



6. If you have uploaded resources, are these resources that you have used with students previously, or resources that you intend to use with students in this academic year?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Used previously		43.9%	18
Will use in this academic year		17.1%	7
Neither of these		39.0%	16
answered question			41
skipped question			14

7. In regard to your OWN resources on HumBox, tick any options that are true:			
		Response Percent	Response Count
You have used them in class directly from the HumBox site		20.7%	6
You have used them by sending students to HumBox independently in their own time		24.1%	7
You have used them in your teaching, and then uploaded them to HumBox		69.0%	20
You have prepared them and uploaded them to HumBox but not used them in teaching		31.0%	9
answered question			29
skipped question			26


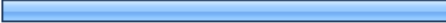
8. Have you downloaded and saved any resources from HumBox?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		51.9%	28
No		48.1%	26
answered question			54
skipped question			1

9. Have you used anyone else's resources on HumBox directly in your teaching?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		21.8%	12
No		78.2%	43
answered question			55
skipped question			0



10. If yes, how did you use it/them?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
By downloading it and using it as it is, with students		21.4%	3
By downloading it, editing it and using it with students		50.0%	7
By directing students to the URL to use the resource within the HumBox itself		28.6%	4
Other (please specify)			2
answered question			14
skipped question			41

11. Have any of the resources on Humbox influenced your own pedagogic practice in some way, perhaps by inspiring you or giving you ideas for something you could do in your classes?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		24.0%	12
No		76.0%	38
answered question			50
skipped question			5

12. If yes, indicate how and give examples of which resources on HumBox inspired you:		Response Count
		11
answered question		11
skipped question		44



13. Have you downloaded and remixed or edited any HB resources for your own purposes, e.g. research, professional interest?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		10.0%	5
No		90.0%	45
answered question			50
skipped question			5

14. If yes, please describe which resource and indicate how and why you used/edited it.		
		Response Count
		5
	answered question	5
	skipped question	50

15. Have you made a comment on someone else's resource?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		20.0%	10
No		80.0%	40
	answered question		50
	skipped question		5

16. Has another HumBox user made a comment on any of your resources?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		28.9%	13
No		71.1%	32
	answered question		45
	skipped question		10

17. If yes, did you take any actions in response to the comment? Please describe:		
		Response Count
		10
	answered question	10
	skipped question	45

18. Have you made contact with any other HumBox users through the site email facility?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		8.2%	4
No		91.8%	45
	answered question		49
	skipped question		6

19. What is good about the HumBox site (why do you like to use it)? Please write comments in the box below.		
		Response Count
		32
	answered question	32
	skipped question	23

20. What do we need to do to improve HumBox? Please write your comments in the box below.		
		Response Count
		32
	answered question	32
	skipped question	23

21. Please add any other comments on Humbox or expand on earlier answers in the box below:	
	Response Count
	10
answered question	10
skipped question	45

22. The project team wish to report on the impact of the HumBox project and its resources by the production of 'case studies of a resource'. This will point to best practice in open sharing and offer useful guidance to others in the effective use of OERs. Would you be willing to be contacted further by the project team? If yes, please click here to send us an automatic confirmation [goes to humbox@soton.ac.uk] The HumBox team will contact you.	
Response Percent	Response Count
answered question	7
skipped question	48