

# Public Good or Common Pool Resource?

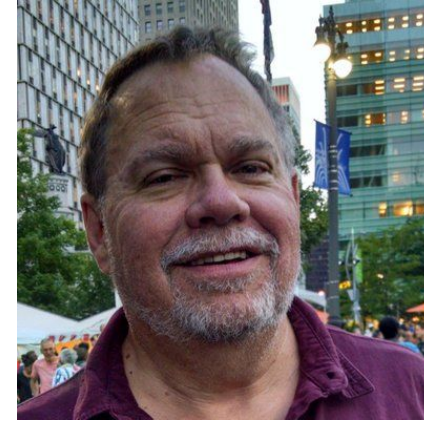
What does it mean to share an OER Commons?

Nathan Smith, PhD  
Houston Community College

# The Opposing Sides



David Wiley  
CAO, Lumen Learning



Jim Luke  
Economics Professor,  
Lansing Community  
College

# Some basic terminology

The Econ 101 matrix of goods:

Def. “excludable”: the degree to which a good or service can be limited to paying customers

Def. “rivalrous”: a good is rivalrous if one consumer’s enjoyment of the good prevents other consumers from enjoying the same good at the same time

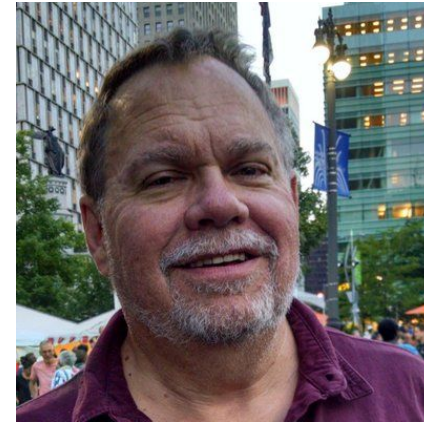
	Excludable	Non-excludable
Rivalrous	Private Goods e.g., cars, clothes, houses	Common Pool Resources e.g., fisheries, forests
Non-rivalrous	Club Goods e.g., theater, theme parks	Public Goods e.g., highways, national defense



### OpenEd18: “Questioning the OER Orthodoxy: Is Commons the Right Metaphor for our Work in OER?”

OER is not a commons; it's a public good:

1. OER is non-rivalrous
2. OER does not face a problem of enclosure
3. OER does not require community collaboration to manage the resource (the license is perpetual)



### OpenEd19: “OER Sustainability: Does Open Drain the Pool?”

OER aren't the resource, they are byproducts of the resource, which is the academy (a learning commons)

Educational products suffer from

- enclosure by for-profit entities
- uneven distribution
- lack of reciprocity, sharing, and mission-driven principles

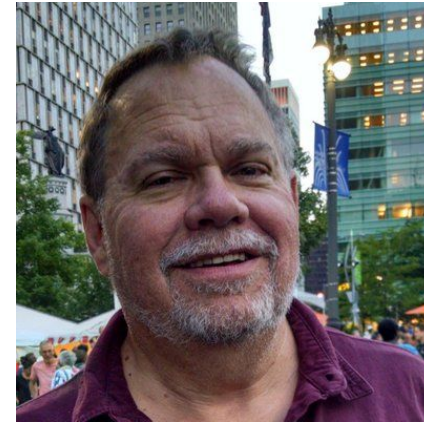


### Chief goals of OER stewardship:

- Encouraging production
- Increase funding (through private and public means)

### Chief threats to OER:

- Free-riding



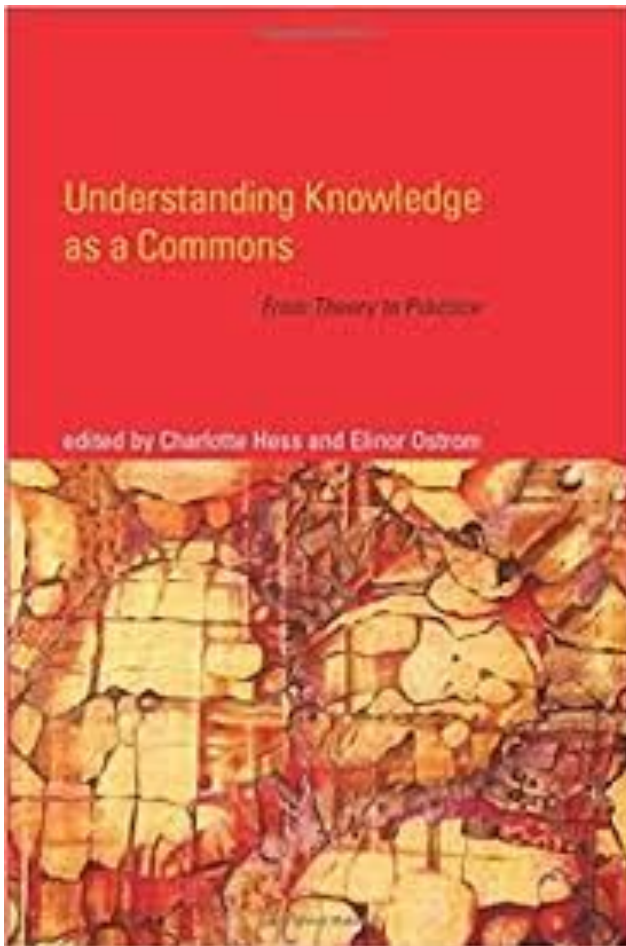
### Chief goals of OER stewardship:

- Emphasize the educational value of open
- Increase reciprocity
- Empower faculty to create and share

### Chief threats to OER:

- Corporatization and monetization

# Understanding Knowledge as a Commons



Hess and Ostrom (2007)

Commons as a complex system of practices

- local norms and governance structures
- enforcement mechanisms for behavior
- participatory and democratic processes for setting and enforcing rules

Knowledge as a commons resource

- knowledge is fundamentally shared and collaborative
- preserving and sustaining knowledge requires shared practices, standards, and know-how



# Examples of knowledge commons

- Libraries and scholarly communications
  - Libraries used to provide a framework for supporting a knowledge commons
  - Increased digitization promises greater accessibility
  - But, in fact, DRM encloses the commons
  - Open Access movements try to re-common the library
  - Preservation and continuity of digital materials
- Wikipedia
  - Volunteer-based production of encyclopedic information
  - Community standards, moderation, and editing norms
- Learning communities, conferences, scholarly associations
  - Informal and formal practices of sharing knowledge
  - Community standards and practices
  - Largely volunteer services

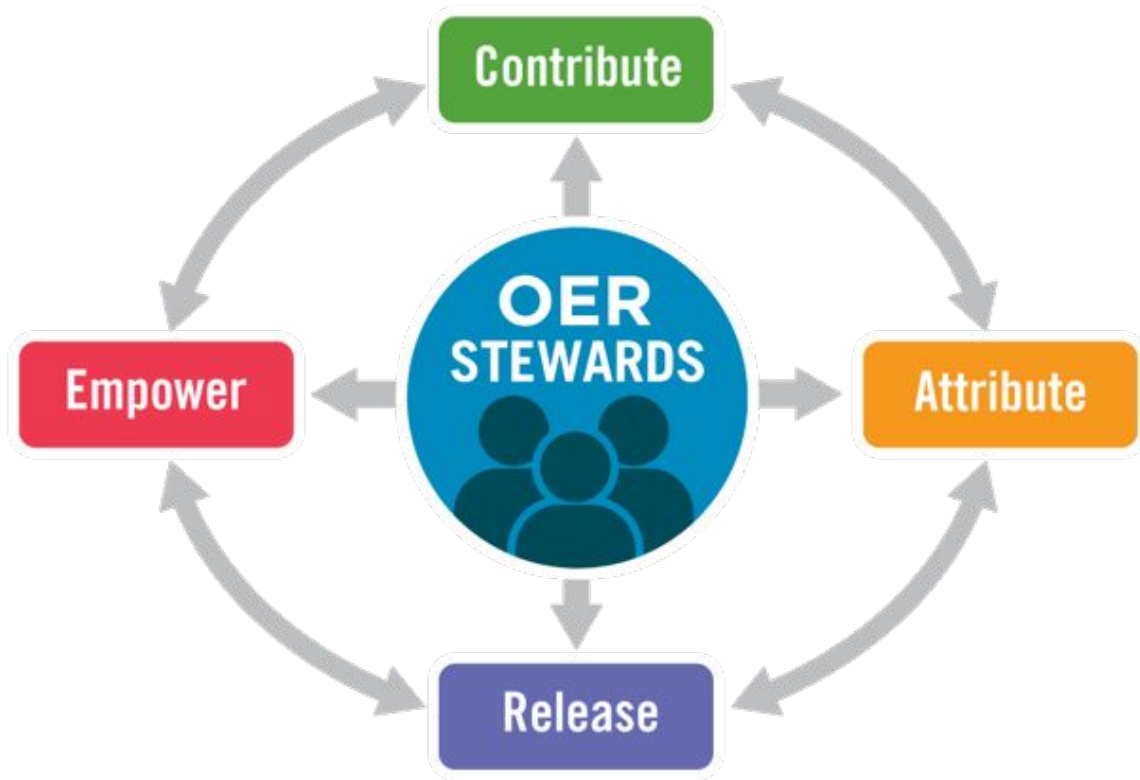
# Education as Resisting the Tendency of Private Accumulation of Property

- Paolo Friere: the “banking model” of education (exclusionary, gatekeeping)
  - Education is collaborative
  - Education benefits from greater democratization
- Capitalist private enterprise has an extractive and accumulative inclination (private enclosure)
  - Education is ampliative and contagious
  - Education benefits from greater openness

These forces conspire with Intellectual Property law to impose barriers on knowledge as a resource



# The CARE Framework (2.0?)



- Articulate the values that govern OER
  - Contributing
  - Empowering
  - Attributing
  - Releasing
  - Protecting Privacy
- Open is about more than artifacts
  - Teaching and learning practices
  - Reforming the production and distribution of knowledge

# Concluding thoughts

OER artifacts (textbooks and learning materials) behave like public goods

- they need funding to enable production

Open education is a knowledge commons

- it needs collective practices and values
- it can be harmed through enclosures (restrictions on sharing and IP)
- it is sustained through communities of practice