

THE MYTH OF MOOCS

There has been a great deal of discussion of MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) in the general and educational press in Australia over the past couple of months. It was sparked by the University of Melbourne joining the US-based startup, Coursera, followed by a large number of other universities announcing their intentions in the MOOC area, including joining many of the other MOOC-promoting organisations, or (in the case of Deakin) doing their own. This paper will survey the coverage of the MOOC, and the meanings attributed to the term.

But are MOOCs even possible, other than as teasers or peripheral education products? In the Australian on 7 November 2012, Andrew Trounson speculated on some of the copyright issues. He quoted Derek Whitehead as saying: "This is a big deal if you want to do more than provide some of the university's content on the open web for nothing. If you want to go beyond your university's own content then that is a much more complex issue" and he went on to say "These issues are complex and no-one has really come to grips with them at this point." Mr Trounson also quoted Vice-Chancellor Jane den Hollander from Deakin University on the approach they are taking – she described the issue as "one of the big undiscussed challenges." The authors propose to discuss this at THETA13 in their paper.

The paper will canvas issues relating to the relationship between higher education teaching (online, face to face and blended) and MOOCs, and in particular look at how MOOCs might incorporate content which is not owned by the University. It will bring in consideration of commercially licensed content, use of the Statutory licenses in Parts VA and VB of the Copyright Act 1968, and conditions applying to the use of these licences. It will discuss the relevance of open education resources, and open licencing generally.

The paper will draw some conclusions about the likely future development of MOOCs, and what directions they might take in the future, in the light of the issues above.

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