Becoming a Digital Scholar: the impact of teaching digital literacies and open educational practices on staff experiences

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Abstract

Drawing on Weller's (2011) notion of the digital scholar, this research uses phenomenography to explore higher education staff experiences of digital literacies and open educational practices. Thirteen interviews were conducted with staff who completed modules in educational technologies, digital literacies and open practices as part of postgraduate study. The research explored the impact of these modules and the resulting variation in experiences. The study concludes that staff digital literacies are commonly perceived through the lens of students as 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001). There are four categories of experience in relation to staff digital literacies including some who lack confidence, some who stay in their comfort zone, those who are willing to develop their digital literacies and those who recognise it's an ongoing process and goes beyond technical skills. Meanwhile most staff have a more limited understanding of open educational practices, some equate it with open access research, but others share the values of openness and find learning about this topic transformational. Limitations include the small sample size, and further research is recommended. The findings highlight how digital literacies and OEP are under-explored by many staff in higher education. Consequently, the transformation that Weller (2011) predicted in scholarly communication and knowledge sharing in higher education, remains under-developed. However, our research suggests that the modules allowed staff to deepen their understanding of critical issues related to how higher education is engaging with digital technologies to support scholarship, going beyond what they receive in technical training.

Introduction

This paper reports on findings from research to understand staff experiences of digital literacies and open educational practices (OEP) building on an earlier study (Secker, 2020). The research drew on phenomenography (Marton, 2014) to explore variation in experiences, interviewing 13 staff in one UK university in 2023. We also sought to understand the impact that two modules, taught as part of the Masters in Academic Practice (MAAP), play in shaping staff experiences. These modules are intended to

develop staff digital literacies, help them use educational technology and explore open educational practices. We know staff experiences of digital technologies have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid shift to online teaching. However, staff development in these areas remains crucial to prepare academics for an increasingly digital university. While the concept of the 'digital scholar' (Weller, 2011) is not new, we believe it might help staff to critically engage with how technology might be transforming their own academic practices and higher education more broadly.

Background and context

City St George's, University of London offers a Masters in Academic Practice programme to teaching staff, graduate teaching assistants, professional services staff with teaching or training responsibilities and externals. It can be undertaken as a PGCert, a PGDip or a full MA. The PGCert is accredited by AdvanceHE and those who complete it gain Fellowship status (FHEA). A version of the module EDM124 Developing Digital Education has been taught for over 10 years; however, it was substantially redesigned in 2021/22. Meanwhile, a 15-credit module called EDM122: Digital Literacies and Open Practice has run since 2018. Typically, there are over 100 students on the programme each year with around 20 students taking EDM124 and 15 students taking EDM122.

In 2019, we conducted a review that suggested around half of the PGCerts in UK universities have an educational technology module similar to EDM124. However, EDM122 is a relatively unique course and was partly inspired by a module at the University of Manchester called Open Knowledge in Higher Education (University of Manchester, 2024). The EDM122 module explores digital and information literacies of staff and students, including dispelling the myth of the 'digital native', and how to embed digital and related literacies into teaching. It draws significantly on Weller's (2011) notion of 'digital scholarship' that sees digital literacies and open educational practices as fundamentally linked. The module also helps develop staff identify the motivations and barriers to open educational practices (OEP) (Cronin and MacLaren, 2018) and how these relate to copyright literacy (Morrison and Secker, 2022).

EDM122 is an elective module for master's students in Library and Information Science (LIS) and has been completed by several members of professional services staff for continuing professional development. In the spirit of open practice, the module webinar series has been made available to anyone to join. Recordings and resources are shared on the module blog and the student's final assignment is also openly licensed and published (City St George's, University of London, 2024).

The programme team were keen to understand the role these modules play in supporting staff to develop their digital literacies and OEP, and had the following research questions:

- What is the experience of staff who use educational technologies and how do their attitudes towards digital literacies impact on their teaching?
- How are staff currently supported to develop a good understanding of these literacies and practices as part of these two modules which form part of the MA in Academic Practice.

Literature Review

This research draws on literature in two key interlinked areas of practice: digital literacies and open educational practices. Central to the EDM122 module and undertaking this research is the concept of the digital scholar (Weller, 2011). Weller saw these terms as inextricably linked, arguing that digital technology impacts on scholarly practices but that staff need to develop their digital literacies to take advantage of how open educational practices might transform higher education. Subsequent research on digital scholarship suggests that the field is fragmented (Raffaghelli et al, 2016) and networked scholarship might be more cohesive sub-discipline, but we see also see pockets of research and communities developed in digital libraries and in digital humanities. This potentially makes it harder to support staff in a consistent way. Meanwhile, Scanlon (2018) recommends understanding the impact of digital tools on academic practices, on the greater need for open practices in academia, on the importance of interdisciplinarity and sharing and for staff to be mindful of their digital footprint. Weller's book was published in 2011; therefore, we aimed to understand what it means currently to be a digital scholar, and what staff understand about digital literacies and open practice, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Digital Literacies and Staff Confidence

Digital literacies can be a contested term in the literature (Secker, 2017); however, there is usually a recognition that it is both the technical and the critical skills needed to know when and why to use technology in both personal and professional contexts. Jisc tend to refer to them as digital capabilities which are "...the capabilities which fit someone for living, learning and working in a digital society" (Jisc, 2014) and this definition is used on both modules.

Research investigating staff digital literacies typically relates to the adoption (or otherwise) of educational technologies. Loughlin (2017) found that 41% of staff reported a lack of digital skills as a barrier to adoption of educational technology; however, with the same staff reporting high levels of use

of technology, these disparities are attributed to attitude rather than ability. Greener and Wakefield (2015) suggest that the issue is not necessarily with the level of digital literacies, but with staff confidence. A notable challenge for academic staff seems to be confidence in using technology in front of their students and fear of failing to use technology well (Garcia et al., 2013; Greener & Wakefield, 2015; Secker, 2020).In addition, Bennett and Folley (2015) suggest that focusing solely on digital literacies "problematises the skills and practices of the academic staff" (Bennett & Folley, 2015, p.112). The focus therefore needs to be on developing staff confidence alongside competence in the use of technology and moving away from a "techno-centric" approach where they learn about the technology through workshops to a "knowledge-centric" approach based on experience and experimentation (Salmon & Wright, 2014). This is the focus of the MA modules, encouraging staff to develop skills in a supportive environment through reflection on their own abilities and building confidence through structured use of technology.

Digital Scholar and Open Educational Practices

The other aspect of digital scholarship as defined by Weller is openness. In this field, there are many variations of openness (Pomerantz and Peek, 2016), which may lead to confusion amongst staff. The term 'open educational practice' (OEP) used in our teaching comes from Cronin (2017, p.16-17), who sees it as including the creation, use, and reuse of open educational resources, the use of open pedagogies and sharing of teaching practices. However, openness is sometimes equated to 'free' or 'freely available' rather than this stricter definition that focuses on content shared with an open licence, such as Creative Commons. Research examining the practice of academic staff in Irish higher education shows relatively slow adoption of 'open educational practices' (Cronin, 2017). A recent systematic review of the benefits and challenges of using Open Educational Resources in higher education (Swain and Pathak, 2024) identified lack of technical skills, professional development and institutional support as key barriers to their adoption.

As Weller (2011) recognised, OEP is often closely linked to an academic's digital literacies. Cronin (2017) also explored the barriers and motivations towards staff involvement in OEP. Her research identified four dimensions shared by open educators: balancing privacy and openness, developing digital literacies, valuing social learning, and challenging traditional teaching role expectations. In addition, OEP typically require a good understanding of copyright and open licensing models (Cronin, 2017, p.28).

Secker (2020) found that academics were concerned about open practices; for example, they were worried that their work wasn't good enough, that sharing openly might hamper their chances of being published, or they had concerns about copyright, ethics or confidentiality issues. Disciplinary differences in attitudes towards open practice were also noted; for example, an academic working in health sciences was aware that colleagues who worked in the National Health Service (NHS) may not have access to the same journals that she had, whereas an academic from arts and humanities, felt that sharing research openly at an early stage might hamper their chances of being published, or mean their ideas could be 'stolen' by other researchers (Secker, 2020, p.5367).

Finally, there has already been research (Watermeyer et al., 2021) suggesting that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on university staff in terms of their mental health, their approaches to teaching, but less is known about whether it led to developments in their own digital literacies or a shift in attitudes towards OEP. For example, Nicklin et al. (2022) refer to a 'forced technological upskilling' of staff that has led to enhanced use of online teaching, and the availability of peer support through online collaborations, but they don't focus on how staff felt about this rapid development of their digital literacies and working more openly. We experienced an increase in interest in the two MA digital education modules, with a need to add an extra iteration of the pre-cursor to EDM124 to accommodate the demand. Anecdotally, we have seen a post-pandemic shift in staff skills and confidence, for example, with production of videos for the first assessment in EDM122. We hoped that this study might fill a gap in the literature in addition to helping us understand these issues further.

Methodology

The study drew on phenomenography to explore the variation in experiences of staff as this can be used to design learning interventions. Phenomenography builds on Marton's Theory of Learning, which proposes teachers identify aspects of a curriculum critical for student's understanding and use the variations in experience to inform the design of the programme (Marton, 2014). Akerlind (2024) explains how phenomenography has developed into a research method that explores variation in human experience of a phenomena. It therefore involves asking people open questions about what they do and how they feel, rather than asking them about why they might adopt specific practices. In this study we use the term 'experience' to identify how people understand digital literacies and OEP and to draw out the differences in understanding that might exist to create distinct categories of description.

Ethical approval was obtained for this study which used semi-structured interviews carried out on Microsoft Teams in the summer of 2023. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded using a thematic analysis which followed a process of reading and re-reading the transcripts to look for commonality and variation (Akerlind, 2012). We devised a longer list of categories of description, which over a process of reading and re-reading were refined to capture the differences and to try and create a hierarchy, as is common in phenomenography. It is hoped that these categories will help inform our teaching and we have already tested out using them in classes to see if our students, who are mainly university staff, identify with them.

The interview participants were academic and professional services staff at City St George's and one external participant who had completed the relevant MA modules. Academic staff represented a range of subject disciplines including law, business, engineering, music, library science, computer science, nursing, optometry and several professional services colleagues in careers and digital education. In terms of modules, five participants had undertaken EDM124 (Developing Digital Education), one participant had undertaken EDM122 (Digital Literacies and Open Practices) and seven had undertaken both modules. They were drawn from the 2021/22 and 2022/23 cohorts.

During the interviews, participants were asked broad questions on the following topics to try and understand their experiences:

- How do they define terms such as digital literacies and open practice?
- What support do they need to develop their own (and their students) digital literacies and what is the role of modules in supporting them?
- What attitudes do they have towards the concept of 'openness' in their teaching?
- Do they share their teaching or research materials openly and how do they make decisions about re-using others and licensing their own work?
- What changes might they have made to their teaching or research practices since completing the two modules and how is this impacting on their students or beyond
- What changes might the pandemic have made towards their attitudes and practices in this field?

Findings

Staff attitudes towards their own digital literacies

The literature shows us that digital literacies can be defined in multiple ways (Secker, 2017); therefore, we started by exploring what participants understood by the term as it applied to their own abilities.

Our findings suggest that some participants still equated digital literacy with functional or technical abilities. However, others clearly understood that it was also about critical evaluation skills:

> …it's like an ability to use technology, but also an ability to assess when you might use that, that technology and an ability to assess what other people are doing with the technology. (Interview 13)

Participants were asked to discuss their own digital literacies and then to comment on those of their students. Significantly, almost all participants used student digital literacies as a lens to reflect on their own abilities, stating where they might have more or less developed skills than their students. In some cases, participants also reflected on their digital literacies in relation to their colleagues or their children. The EDM122 module explores generational perspectives on digital literacies with a critical discussion on the narrative of 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001). The module also introduces participants to the 'Visitor and Resident' typology (White and Le Cornu, 2011) as an alternative way of conceptualising digital literacies. One participant recognised how their own thinking had shifted as a result of taking the module:

> […] through the module, I came to understand that actually it doesn't mean that because someone is older, therefore they are not as good, they are not as literate as the younger generation. (Interview 10)

Staff experiences when developing their own digital literacies revealed some interesting variation in experience. Four distinct categories emerged from the data, which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Participants experience when developing their own digital literacies

Category	Implications
Category 1: Staff are aware of their own limitations with technology or lack confidence	Digital literacy is a challenge and staff lack confidence. Staff are reluctant to use technology or under-value their abilities (usually when they perceive their students or children to be better at this or more naturally proficient).
Category 2: Staff remain in their 'comfort zone' when it comes to using technology	Digital literacy is approached on a 'need to know' basis. Digital technology is used but often in a fairly limited way and are less comfortable trying new tools.
Category 3: Staff are willing to develop their digital skills in a specific context.	Digital literacy is functional. It is valued, but often in a specific context or to carry out a task, such as to support online teaching. Staff are comfortable trying new tools at a basic level and can support their own development using online resources but lack

	may confidence when it comes to activities that they perceived as advanced.
Category 4: Staff recognise digital literacy needs to be constantly worked on	Digital literacy is like going to the gym to keep fit. These staff often have the most developed and mature attitude to technology and realise it's part of academic life and goes beyond technical skills.

Participants in category 1 were very aware of their own technical skills being less developed and even labelled themselves using terms such as 'luddite':

> When I first joined EDM124, I told (the teacher) I am a luddite, I don't do technology and that is why I forced myself to do the technology enabled route of the MAAP because I know technology is so important and so fundamental and I don't really like it.... I am a pen and paper kind of girl. (Interview 7)

Another talked of being 'superficially capable' saying:

> I think I'm capable. But quite superficially capable, as long as I can explain it to somebody else. And people do come to me often and say, can you show me how to do this? Then I know I understand what I'm doing, but I don't. But it doesn't go any deeper than that. (Interview 9)

For category 2, participants chose to remain in a 'comfort zone' of their digital skills such that they were happy using certain tools, but didn't want to take that further:

> I think what you do is you use what you need within your comfort zone and you don't have to go outside of that and stretch. (Interview 5)

Participants in category 3 felt relatively confident about their own digital literacy skills and trying new things within a specific context but noted that they aren't as technical as others. Many of them talked about the tools they used as part of their teaching and that their skills and confidence using technology had developed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic:

> If you give me a new system to work with, I'm generally not going to be that freaked out by it. I'm quite happy to usually to kind of go in and play around with things and get used to using it and that kind of thing. But at the same time, I'm not. I'm not like massively Techie [...] like one of my colleagues. (Interview 13)

Another stated:

> I'm reasonably competent to a degree if it gets too technical, then I'm out. Like if you start asking me to code, I'm gone. But if it's like how to use this programme, then I'll probably go to YouTube and look up a tutorial. (Interview 4)

In category 4 participants were more confident in their own abilities and keen to develop their digital literacies, with a focus on keeping up to date. They explained how attending workshops or taking modules in digital education and digital literacy was an opportunity to reflect on their abilities, and to recognise that it was something that needed to be worked on:

> It's an area I want to keep growing, so .... if you had me sort of rate my confidence in IT probably before the course would have been pretty low, but then doing the course, obviously I've learned a lot, but also realise that it wasn't that low compared to some other people. So, it's an area that I want to grow and develop in. (Interview 6)

Unsurprisingly several participants spoke about the pace of change in relation to technology, specifically talking about the rise of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI). One said:

> And I guess in the last few months with all the stuff about ChatGPT, you suddenly feel like yourself like an AI [expert]. I'm kind of caught between this idea of, … is this another massive jump in technology that I have to get my head round and you can sort of almost feel like what it must be for some people who just that are think …technology has got gone too far and I just can't keep up with it. (Interview 13)

Reflecting on the value of taking modules such as EDM122 and EDM124, it was clear that participants had considered their own digital literacies alongside those of others. The modules had helped to build their confidence in being able to try new technologies.

> I gained a lot because it's it made me think a little bit differently about digital technology and I think now I feel a little bit more confident. What it's made me think is I want to learn more within my new role. (Interview 12)

The modules had also helped to build confidence through demonstrating their digital literacies, for example, referring to a group assignment as part of their MA in Academic Practice, one participant said: "Everyone was super impressed because yeah, I just know how to do hyperlinks". (Interview 11).

Staff attitudes towards open educational practices (OEP)

An important part of this research was to explore staff experiences of OEP. During the interviews we avoided providing staff with a definition but asked them to talk about what openness meant to them and whether it was important in relation to their teaching or research.

OEP was a term that was less familiar to some of the participants and their understanding seemed to have been shaped by whether they had completed the module EDM122. In the case of the individual

below, they had completed both EDM124 and EDM122 and they recognised OEP was about sharing content (either teaching or research) and being able to reuse it without penalty:

> For me, I would say open educational practices are me being able to go online or speak to colleagues and get information from them about what they do and be able to use that. To help me do other things without worrying about whether or not I'm stepping on somebody's toes or going to get into trouble for, you know, using somebody else's ideas. (Interview 9)

Three categories of experience emerged from our data, which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Participant experience of open educational practices

Category	Implications
Category 1: Staff have a limited understanding of OEP	OEP is an unknown quantity. This was more common for individuals who had not completed the module EDM122, but some expressed this view even after taking the module.
Category 2: Open is about policy: e.g. open access to research	OEP is a process and a hoop to jump through. OEP for these people can be more bounded – they may engage with policies that tell them they need to make publications available on open access but not always with an underpinning belief that this is important.
Category 3: Open is a value – it means sharing their knowledge widely, sharing their teaching materials and the idea of education being free	OEP is part of my values. Learning about OEP for these people gives a name to something that they already held as a value or belief.

In category 1, participants had a limited understanding of open educational practices. One participant expressed concern about not knowing enough about this area:

> Well, since I don't really know very much about it [...] my slight concern is sometimes using images from the Internet or in my teaching. …I don't want to get anybody into trouble, not, you know, not least myself, but also the institution by using copyrighted material or anything. (Interview 7)

In category 2, OEP was equated purely with open access and research publications:

> We would love all of our work to be Open Access. Unfortunately, when it comes to, you know, publishers, we're kind of at the mercy of the publishing house when it comes to what can be Open Access and what can't. [...] a lot of those journals operate for profits. And it's really difficult to kind of, you know, share articles that they have the licence. (Interview 2)

Those in category 3 had openness as a fundamental part of their values and they believed in the importance of sharing in education and research. For example:

> We shouldn't be monetising knowledge at all. You pay a subscription for your year of university. You pay for your books and the rest is free. (Interview 8)

For many participants the idea of sharing resources leads to improvements and better outcomes for all; however, one participant said OEP was:

> …being able to go online or speak to colleagues and get information from them about what they do and be able to use that. To help me do other things without worrying about whether or not I'm stepping on somebody's toes or going to get into trouble for, you know, using somebody else's ideas. (Interview 9)

The same participant also spoke of how they wanted to be more open, but felt that was not something their institution permitted:

> I mean, I personally I would like to be very open in my teaching. [...] Unfortunately, because of the course that I teach on, that's not something that is generally allowed. So, they're very protective of the content of the course. Because of competition with other providers. (Interview 9)

Another participant felt what motivated people working in higher education was different to those in other sectors, such as business:

> That kind of thing thrills me. It's this idea that you don't need the monetary aspect. People create incredible things, even if they're not paid to create them. People still create. Ohh. People still write. People still do whatever. Make music, even if they're not being paid. (Interview 8)

Reflecting on the value of taking the EDM122 module, several participants commented about how they had originally thought open practice was about research outputs, but the module had changed that perception:

> Before I came on the module, I thought of it very much in an academic scholarship way. So I thought open means Open Access. [...] publications that are freely available for anyone to utilise and download. (Interview 2)

> Ohh, it's changed. Yeah, it's changed a lot when you initially said Open Access, I wasn't entirely sure what that meant, and then I was like ohh yeah, it's when I'm looking up stuff and I can't quite get there because I'm hitting that paywall. I didn't even know that term existed. I just knew that I hit a I hit a screen that said you have to pay to access this. (Interview 12)

Participating in the module seemed to have a significant impact on some participants, and learning about OEP was transformational and might be likened to a threshold concept. The module also helped to raise their awareness of issues such as copyright and licensing:

> X's [the lecturer] bit about copyright. That's for me. It was like, OK, I need to up my game on this. And that was very helpful. I find it quite a daunting area. (Interview 6)

> Well, watching that Paywall movie was great [...] I said that's why we haven't managed to get through... I know since my pre-registration you would look for articles and things like that and then you would come and ohh you can't access this or you. I never knew what that was about. (Interview 10)

Some participants noted how their own academic practices had changed since being on the module:

> … now I am conscious if there is any Creative Commons sign there. I look at what it is and what I'm allowed to do with that material before I would actually act, access it and distribute it. (Interview 10)

> I'm setting up this new module and actually looking for Open Access articles. (Interview 12)

> ... for me it's ...the idea that if you create stuff, you should hopefully share it. And then also you can use stuff that other people have used. So very much thinking about if somebody else's already created something I don't have to go for and make it myself, but I might be able to take it and adapt it. (Interview 13)

Another said the module changed their understanding of openness:

> And now, since being on the module, I think open is a much more holistic concept, is not just about having access … It's about teaching people how to navigate that knowledge that is freely available… And I think that's what that module really helped me get my head around is that open learning, open practice incorporates quite a big skills element. You know, it's not just about Open Access to knowledge. (Interview 2)

And finally, one participant reflected on what they had learnt, both for themselves and about education more broadly:

> I think I've got a lot of learning ahead of me. I think with open practice I've got a far better understanding of how it impacts on me as an individual, how it impacts on education. (Interview 12)

Discussion and conclusions

This research provides an insight into the experiences of higher education staff post-pandemic. As many universities cope with increased financial pressures, developing a clear pedagogic strategy, using technology to create flexible routes to learning, but also building student engagement, it is vital that we continue to invest in supporting our academic staff to cope with these changes. Our findings suggest Weller's (2011) concept is highly relevant in higher education today and a helpful way of framing academic practice. However, he expected technology to transform scholarly practices, and while staff digital literacies clearly improved during the pandemic, we found some staff remain reluctant to adopt digital practices, lacking confidence. Many viewed digital literacies as functional skills and would develop their understanding of tools and technologies to perform specific tasks, rather than take a more critical approach.

The analysis revealed that there was a range of experiences amongst staff, but studying accredited modules impacted on their understanding of digital literacies and open practices differently. With regards to digital literacies, one significant finding from this research was that participants frequently discussed their own abilities via the lens of students as 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2011). Despite being revised and critiqued extensively in the past 20 years, this generational model has proved to be highly persistent amongst staff. We noted the framing of their own experience through this lens often had a negative impact on staff confidence towards using technology in their teaching. Our findings suggest that the pandemic highlighted issues of inequity but had minimal impact on shifting a strong belief in generational differences towards digital literacies. We therefore conclude that teaching digital literacies to staff needs to take a more critical and evidence-informed approach, rather than a techno-centric approach (Salmon and Wright, 2014) that many universities adopt through short skills-based courses. We would also recommend this approach is also adopted as universities develop staff development activities on GenAI. One particularly effective way we found to critique the digital native has been to present alternative models, so for example the 'Visitor and Resident' typology (White and Le Cornu, 2011) is used in EDM122 and the students undertake a mapping exercise, to review their own digital practices and use of different tools. However, we have also devised a short quiz that explores myths around young people and digital literacy critiquing the 'digital native' narrative.

Meanwhile while knowledge of OEP varied considerably, a significant group of participants aligned themselves with the values of openness and sharing. The pandemic further developed some participants' recognition of the value of OEP and their awareness of student inequalities. Again, traditionally many institutions focus on running ad-hoc training and workshops which tend to focus on open access policies and procedures. However, completing our modules appears to mean participants

develop a deeper understanding of OEP, which prior to this was often focused on open access research. Some participants had started to use and create open educational resources and were increasingly aware of the need to understand issues such as copyright and licensing. In the case of the EDM122 module, the impact was more marked; it seemed to have a transformative effect on some participants, potentially acting as a threshold concept. This aligns with the work of Tur et al. (2020) who established OEP as transformative for developing as an open educator. Teaching about OEP therefore serves as a mechanism to support this transformation and we recommend it is integrated into academic practice programmes. In our modules we use elements of play and gamification to introduce participants to fictional characters from an open access game, the Publishing Trap throughout the module. This game has a number of benefits but can help develop critical approaches to learning about copyright and scholarly practice (Secker and Morrison, 2022). We have also devised a number of learning activities to explore the wider ethical issues associated with open access and to help identify the benefits (and challenges) of OEP. In summary, we believe that activities to encourage debate around the nature of traditional and open scholarly practices and to integrate critical digital literacy form an important part of our academic practice programme. We recommend that other educational developers consider introducing similar approaches to enhance their programme and support staff become 'digital scholars' but also agents for change in their institution.

Limitations of this study include the relatively small sample size. Additionally, two of the researchers were part of the MA course team and as participants were students on this programme the power dynamic needs to be acknowledged as it may have influenced their responses. This research also collected additional interview data which requires further analysis. This includes more data on staff views about student digital literacies and what training and support staff need. We also used a reflective writing exercise, which explores the impact of the pandemic on higher education staff. Further publications on these topics are planned in due course.

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