The African Virtual University

A Strategic Approach to
Open Educational Resources (OERs)

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Background to the AVU-MIT-OCW Pilot

The AVU's OER Initiatives with Partner Institutions

- Current focus is on:

  - ✓ Contextualization of foreign content and development of local programs in Computer Science and Business studies

  - ✓ Development of ODeL content for Teacher Education in math, science and ICTs (TESSA)

  - ✓ Enhancing the capacity of partner universities in open distance and electronic learning (ACEP)

- Main challenges include:

  - ✓ Human resources and technological readiness

  - ✓ The introduction of blended modes of learning and teaching and providing access to resources (like OER)

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The AVU and OERs in African Institutions

- The two-prong approach:

  ✓ Introduction of OER Initiatives via the RIF

  ✓ Brokering bandwidth to address connectivity & cost issues
    - Dedicated bandwidth
    - Affordable bandwidth

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The AVU ODeL Initiative Objectives

Participation by African academics in the development of OERs

1. Initiate the process of creating African based communities of practice for OER Creation, Organization, Dissemination and Utilization

2. Facilitate the usage of OERs via the RIF & DL e.g.

   - MIT-OCW Pilot

   - eGranary Pilot

   - Teacher Education Program / TESSA Pilot

   - Partnership with DG – CoP

   - Others?

The AVU/MIT- OCW Pilot Project Objectives

1. Raise Awareness of OpenCourseWare

2. Facilitate the usage of MIT OpenCourseWare in Africa

3. Initiate the process of creating African based communities of practice for ODeL supported by OERs such as OCW

4. Provide research feedback on access to and use of OCW in the context of an African institution of tertiary education

   – **A full report of this Pilot is available upon request**

The AVU's Approach to Introducing MIT's OCW

1. Set up a mirror site within the institution's Local Area Network
   - ✓ Overcome internet access challenge
   - ✓ Access to large video and document files

2. Sensitization of OCW on the ground
   - ✓ Awareness campaign
   - ✓ Sensitization (launch) Workshops

3. Feedback information to OCW architects
   - ✓ Contextualization of the delivery model to suit the African Tertiary Education Institution

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Challenges Faced During the Pilot

- Local challenges to accessing MIT-OCW:

  ✓ Limited Bandwidth

  ✓ "Standard" software not readily available

  ✓ Strict University protocol (who to contact and when)

  ✓ Unreliable Local ICT Infrastructure

  ✓ Power outages

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Participants in the Old Lab at the University of Nairobi's Kikuyu Campus

3 workshops later at Addis Ababa University

Outcomes of the MIT-OCW Pilot in the AVU PIs

A successful pilot characterised by:

- ✓ Immense support and a warm reception from participants at UoN and AAU

- ✓ Predominant criticism pertaining to the scope of the available content

- ✓ Overwhelming majority of the participants had never heard of the MIT OpenCourseWare initiative prior to the marketing for this pilot

- ✓ Participants were appreciative of the initiative that MIT has taken to open up their curriculum to the 'outside' world

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Recommendations for Rolling Out the Pilot

The AVU would recommend that MIT OCW consider:

- ✓ Ensuring that all content is available within the mirror site (at each University) and not from the main OCW Website on the internet.

- ✓ Bundling together with the OCW content all fundamental software required to set up the mirror site (pdf reader, media player etc)

- ✓ Research on various modes for remotely updating content and receiving feedback on usage.

- ✓ Configuring the mirror site to enable editing the web template to match institutions' theme and house styles so as to increase buy-in of the OCW material

- ✓ A sustained mixed-media marketing campaign wherever OCW mirror sites are installed so as to keep up the momentum of use
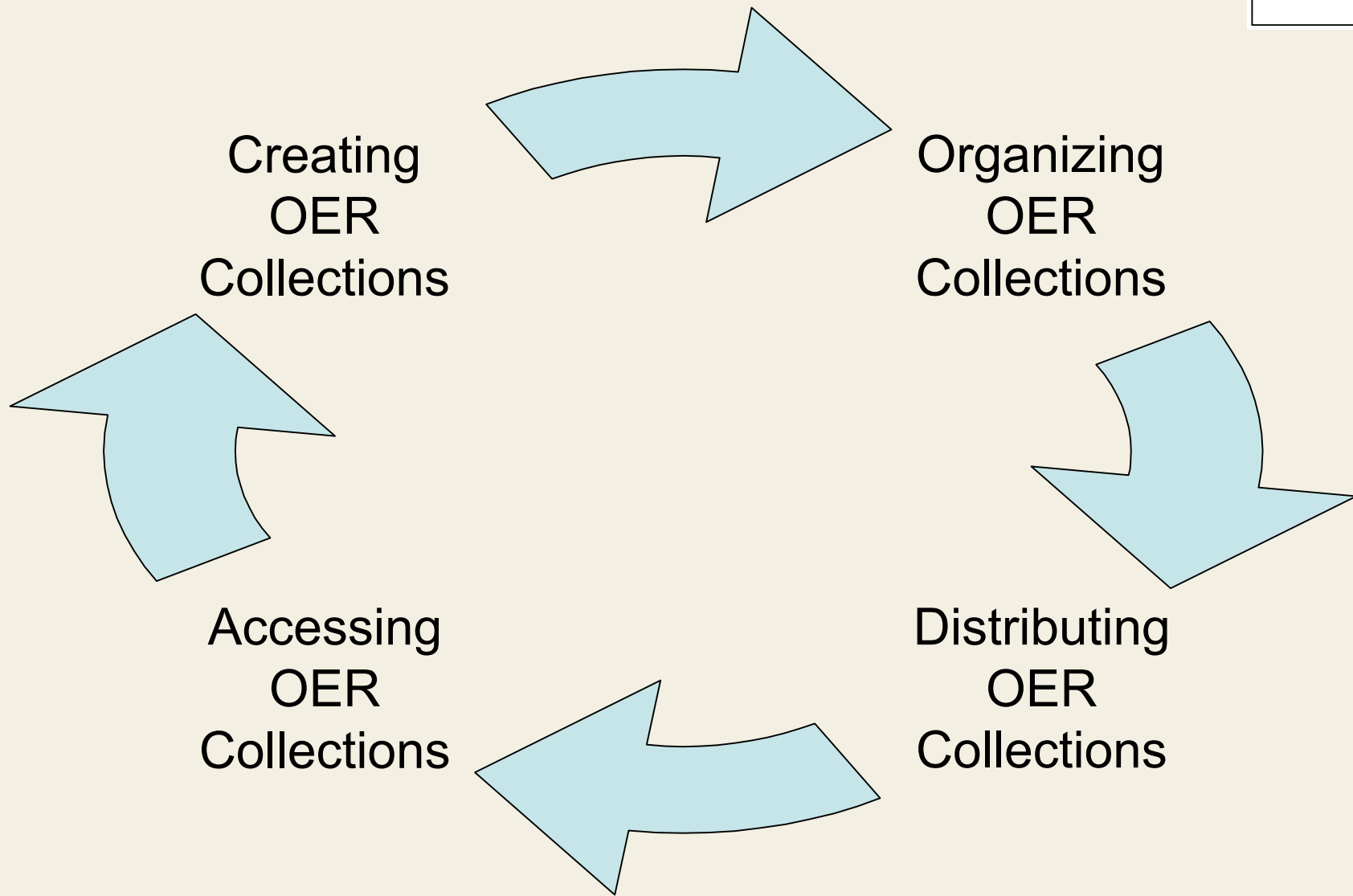
Where to now?

AVU has learned much from this Pilot

A dynamic, rational and comprehensive OER strategy is required to meet the needs of Higher Education in Africa:

- ✓ The AVU OER Architecture
  - Creation
  - Organization
  - Dissemination
  - Utilization
- ✓ Active participation in all above elements by the Partner Institutions in the AVU Network

Creating OER Collections

Organizing OER Collections

Accessing OER Collections

Distributing OER Collections

The AVU & the Partnership for Higher Education

The development of a consortium to purchase bandwidth

- purchased bandwidth for 10 African Universities including the head quarters of the Association of African Universities, and the Kenya Educational Network of 33 tertiary education and training institutions
- Funding has been provided by the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, made up of the Ford, Rockefeller, Mc Arthur, Carnegie, and Hewlett Foundations

Objective

- to switch our network onto the Intelsat network in Feb 2006 once the New skies contract expires
- estimated price of US$2.33 per kilobyte per second per month

Thank You!