oerXiv.org: a Dating Site for Aspiring OER Collaborators

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These slides can be found at https://poritz.net/j/share/oerXivDating19

Grandiose proposals for make me nervous

"I want ⟨name of OER site⟩ *to be the* **Facebook** *of OER."*

Private comment to JP by ⟨OER site's benevolent dictator⟩, 2019

Another with a big claims

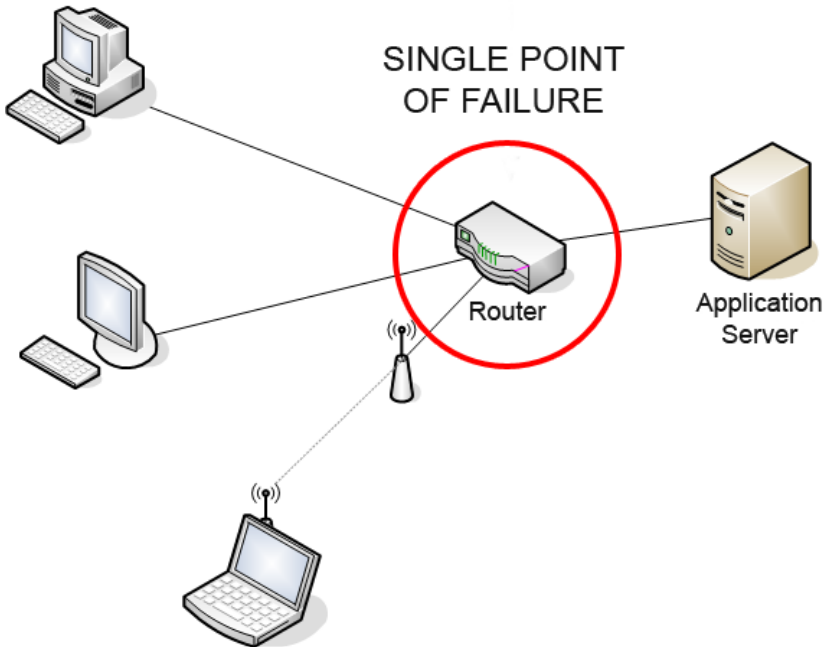


The "Ozymandius Collossus, Ramesseum, Luxor, Egypt", by Charlie Phillip was released under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license

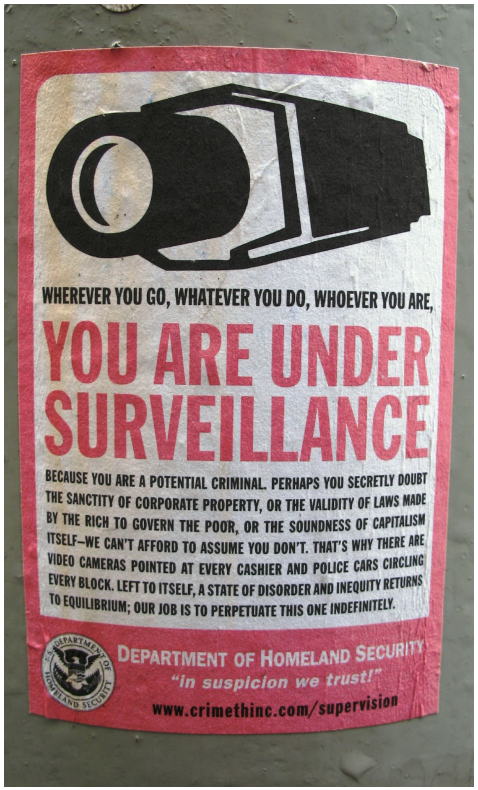
I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains: round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Ozymandius, by Percy Bysshe Shelley
[in the public domain: Shelley died in 1822]

Or more modern reasons



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You are under surveillance by TheeErin is released under a Attribution-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic license.

Sometimes *if you build it, they will come*

One motivational example for the current project is the eprint site arXiv.org, described in some detail in the sequel.

Other reasons the current project is worth building also in the sequel.



Field of Dreams by Lindsey B was released with a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic license.

But first:
What happened in Colorado that drove home the idea that an important tool is missing in the open ed community?

Did we spend some state OER funds unwisely in Colorado?

"We" here is the Colorado OER Council, whose current version was created by the Colorado General Assembly in HB18-1331 and was given $\$500k$ to spend on an OER grant program[1]. The selection criteria in the RFP for this grant program included whether the proposed activity

> *"(i) affects courses with high student enrollment or high textbook or materials costs;*
> *(ii) affects high-impact courses such as core courses, Guaranteed Transfer (GT) Pathways/General Education courses or courses included in concurrent enrollment agreements;"*

As a consequence, we funded around seven or eight projects which suggested creating of adapting a textbook for the first-year writing class *required on all campuses in Colorado*, because it was a high enrollment, GT Pathways, Gen Ed course.

[1] in the first year – we have $1million for years two and three, then we got back to the General Assembly

Well, no

Perhaps it was a waste of money to develop many texts for the same course.

Perhaps not, though: another selection criterion in the RFP was whether the proposed activity

> *"(iii) supports adoption, adaptation and/or development of open educational resources by teams of faculty, librarians and instructional designers within a public institution of higher education or across multiple institutions, making it more likely that the resources will be used in multiple courses or sections;"*

The Council took this to mean that we were trying to support specific, beneficial OER projects in the state, but also to build community and create a culture that defaults to OER for public higher education in our state. Doing that might mean paying for the simultaneous adaptation or creation of separate ENG 101 texts on separate campuses.

What is a *preprint* in the OER world?

OER are, by definition, openly licensed.

So the minute an OER is in some fairly finished form, it is pretty much as published as it is going to be.

Which means that in the OER world, a *preprint* – the resource before it is printed – is nothing other than an OER project in mid-stream, **under construction**.

If we want to get teams of people working on OER projects to serve a very similar need (like ENG 101 on all the campuses of public higher ed in the state of Colorado), we need them to share their work in the *OER preprint* stage.

We need **a preprint server for OER**.



Under Construction was placed into the public domain by publicdomainvectors.org.

Before arXiv.org

When I was a grad student in the early 1990s, publication of mathematics research papers was a very different thing from what it is now.

Submissions to academic journals had funny requirements! This is from the 1992 instructions for submission to the **Annals of Mathematics**:

> **Preparation of manuscripts**
>
> The two copies of manuscripts submitted must be typewritten on one side only (double spacing) with generous margins. Carbon copies, thin paper, and typing with cramped formulas are not acceptable. Greek letters, unless typed, should be underlined in red. Script letters should be indicated by encircling the typed Roman letter in blue (unless typed script letters are available). German letters should *always* be indicated by typing the Roman equivalent and underlining in green. Formulas of length exceeding half a line should be displayed.

Additionally, most journals required that no substantially similar article had been published elsewhere.

The preprint server that changed the scholarly world

Along came the World Wide Web, and a physicist named Paul Ginsparg at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) created in 1993 a website `xxx.lanl.gov` containing physics preprints sorted into a variety of subdisciplines.

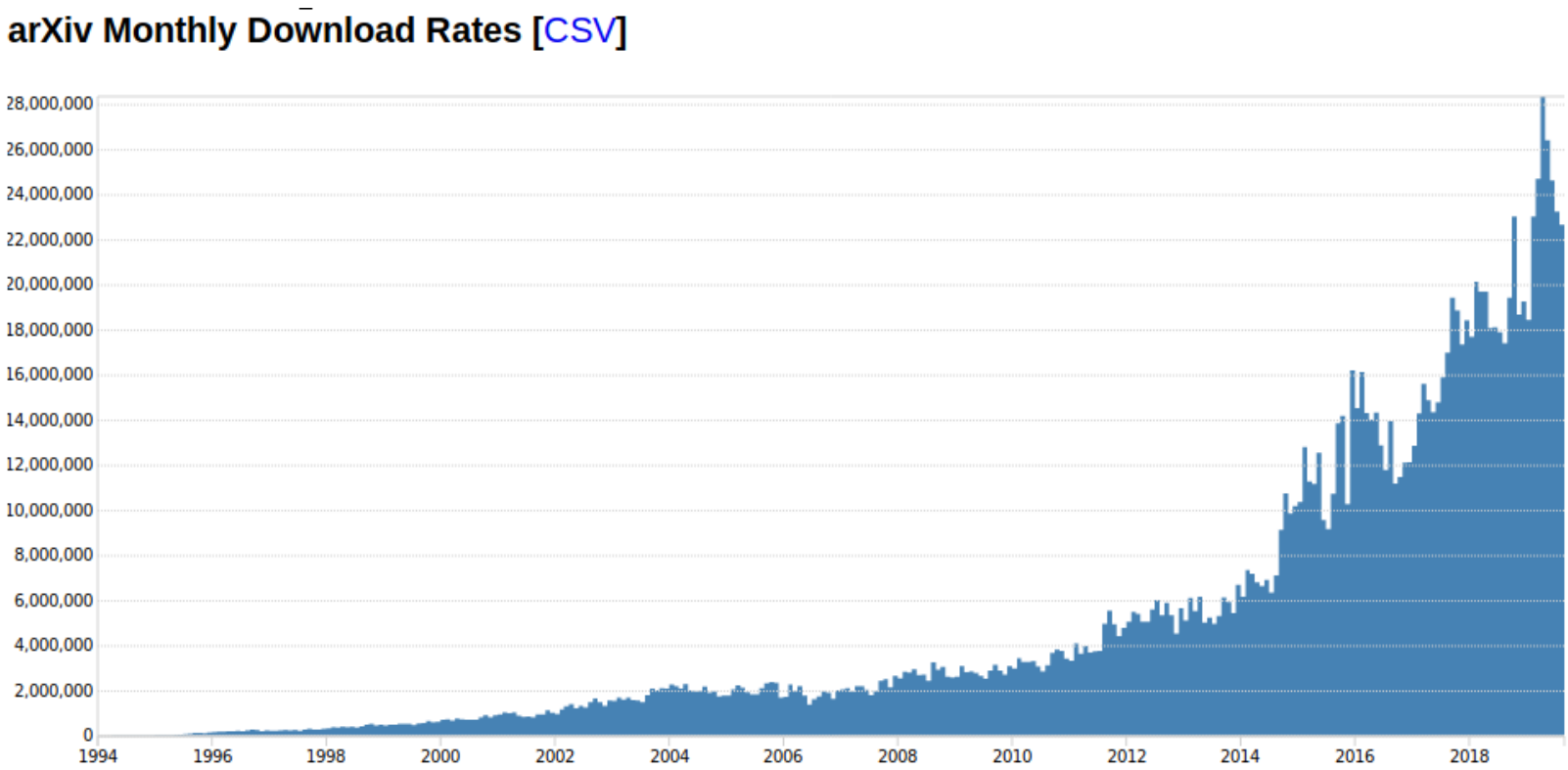
LANL lost interest, so Ginsparg moved to Cornell University in 2001 and changed the name of his site to arXiv.org. The X is thought of as a capital Greek letter *chi*, so the name is pronounced "archive."

Articles submitted to arXiv.org are not peer-reviewed, but go through a light screening process by arXiv.org staff before being posted.

The site now hosts preprints for many sub-disciplines of Physics, Mathematics, Computer Science, Quantitative Biology, Quantitative Finance, Statistics, Electrical Engineering and Systems Science, and Economics. It has spawned the imitators bioRxiv.org, PsyArXiv.org, SocArxiv.org, and even the contrarian site viXra.org (also at Cornell).

arXiv.org dominates by quantity

From arXiv.org's page describing the number of monthly downloads of preprints it hosts:



The total downloads through September 2019 are around **1.5 billion**.

arXiv.org dominates by quality

In a very real sense, essentially every academically important paper, at least in arXiv.org's core areas, appears first on the site.

No scholarly journal publisher in those areas can reject papers any more which appeared in public on a preprint server: they would have nothing to publish.



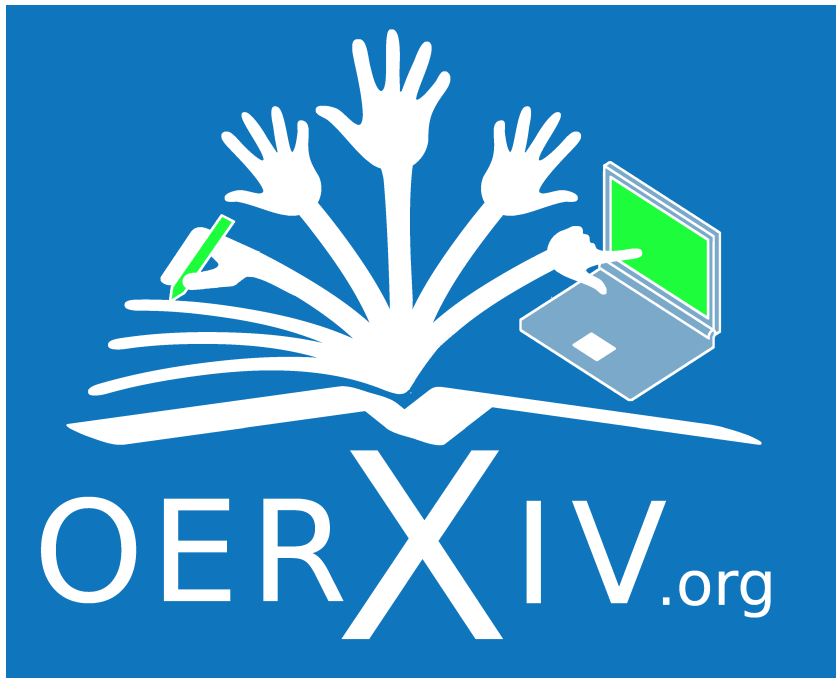
Grigori Perelman, 1993 (re-scanned) by George Bergman was released under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

The two papers Grigori Perelman wrote which proved *Thurston's Geometrization Conjecture*, and therefore automatically, the *Poincaré Conjecture*, have appeared (only) on arXiv.org, as have many other world-changing papers
For this work, Perelman was offered the Fields Medal and the $1million Clay Prize. He turned them both down

arXiv.org's dominance is due to a culture change

Essentially every scholar in arXiv.org's core disciplines has simply made posting to the site part of their scholarly culture.

As we seek to change the culture of the open education community, we could hope that a similar practice would arise there, of posting to a site, maybe "oerXiv.org," any OER project once they have seriously sat down to start working on it.



This oerXiv.org logo by Jonathan Poritz is released under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 license. It is a modification, by adding to and changing the hands in the design and adding the text caption, of the work OER Global Logo by Jonathas Mello, which was licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Unported 3.0 License.

Compare UNESCO logo:



What must oerXiv.org do? 1

Modeled on arXiv.org, oerXiv.org should allow OER creation and adaptation teams to create a new entry *with the kind of information that an instructor and OER author would want to know about OER projects which are under construction*.

This includes at the very least:

- Project/course name
- Current project team and their contact information
- Common course naming and numbering specification for that course, if one exists
- Detailed SLOs for the course
- What background is required of students both in terms of course names and numbers, in some naming system, of prerequisites, as well as the outgoing SLOs from those courses

What must oerXiv.org do? 2

- Other capacities expected of students to take the target course, such as some level of digital literacy, writing ability, and general disciplinary knowledge (which may not be reflected only in the prerequisites)
- External targets the course must satisfy, if any, such as disciplinary or gen ed requirement and professional-track accreditation targets (such as for nursing, *etc.*)
- Titles of, and links to, previous resources which have been used for the target course, with commentary on how well they worked
- Any outline, introduction, overviews, or fragments that already exist for the new resource
- The license under the new will resource will be released
- Any logistical parameters, such as desired format or platform, timeline, and support (financial or otherwise) which might be available to collaborators
- Community requests: any particular desires of specific help or collaboration which the originating team wishes to express.

Current status of oerXiv.org

I bought the domain name and a hosting account with the fabulous Reclaim Hosting a while ago

[Why was this domain name still available, I wonder? It's an obvious name for a repository or OER preprint server...]

I had hoped to build a basic site on my own and have its roll-out here at OE Global 19.

I didn't have time to do the work myself, so after months passed and it was just painfully obvious that the necessary time would not magically appear in my schedule, I've hired the amazing Tom Woodward as a web site consultant to do the build. (This was at Jim Groom's suggestion – thanks Jim!)

Tom has made some good progress, and I hope that a fully functional alpha testing level site will be operational in ... couple of months?

Future plans for oerXiv.org

The first thing I'm going to do is to ask all the Colorado OER authors supported by state funds to register their projects on oerXiv.org. That will be a good test base.

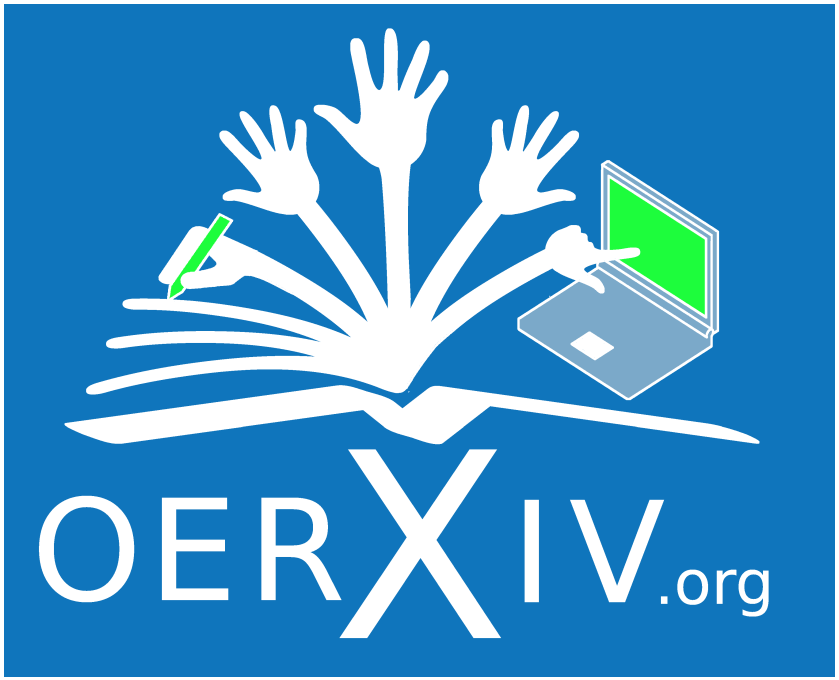
Please send me an email if you are interested in testing and/or using oerXiv.org at various levels of completion.

Then we will polish the site, enable automatic email and Twitter notifications of new project and refine the kinds of searches folks can do when they come to the site.

At the moment, I'm paying (not much) for everything out of my own pocket. If we start to climb some exponential curve of usage statistics and cultural change, like arXiv.org did, I'll need to seek more robust (and expensive) hosting (and therefore other funding). Note, *e.g.*, that arXiv.org currently has a fairly large staff, various advisory boards, and an operating budget of most of a million dollars a year.

Questions? Comments? Contact. Getting slides [links!]

Questions? Comments?



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