David N. Wright

Douglas College

wrightd@douglascollege.ca

Kits for Open Pedagogy: Towards a Physical Practice for Open Access

The proposed contribution makes a case for the development of open access kits to be used as learning modules. As imagined, the kits could be used either as discrete examples for a particular thematic application or as a space for users to work toward more open outcomes—as an alternative to producing purely written work, group projects, or traditional question / response methodologies of inquiry. The kits include all the necessary materials to complete projects through a combination of hardware, instructions, and tertiary materials for social and cultural context. Featuring a variety of historical and literary artifacts as well as hardware—circuit stickers, circuit boards, 3D viewers—each kit is designed to direct the user toward the completion of a central task that involves both construction and the integration of socio-cultural contexts. Kits might guide users in modeling an intersection, building and using a broadcasting radio, designing and deploying a map, or making a boardgame to teach literacy; all using methodologies that speak to both technical concerns and socio-cultural or socio-economic issues that arise when these issues and concerns collide. Users are encouraged to either complete the project, or “hack” the materials to create their own outcomes, “re-problematizing” the issues the original kit was designed to highlight and to pressure the exchange of kits in a variety of community contexts—educational or corporate.

The kits are a representation of open access working as social exchange in that they are openly accessible and exchangeable, while also serving as a space to encourage outcomes from different groups. As such, the contribution reflects upon the development of these open access kits that contain physical materials, are designed to be hacked, and encourage not completion or deployment, but social exchange. The resulting contention is that the process of prototyping, building, and developing ancillary materials in such a way might encourage a more practical way of implementing and sustaining open access projects. Furthermore, outside the disciplinary confines to which the kits might be applied, the kits promote thinking about technical issues in the open, bringing into relief the variety of technical, cultural and social contexts in which things are made, consolidating around conversations already underway about critical making, open pedagogy, applied learning, and media ecology.