

Jisc Institution as E-Textbook Publisher project

Author incentives

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5. **The motivations of the authors** by Professor Frank Rennie, University of the Highlands and Islands

UCL

In the case of UCL's two textbooks, the authors were not seeking financial or other economic rewards. For them, the reward is reputational and they are happy to have the ability to publish their books as open access with their home institution, and to be able to publish a book that is fully tailored to their course. Other reward structures include the ability of the authors to present papers at TILT (the UCL Teaching and Learning Workshop, which takes place every two years). The authors would also be eligible for entry for the Provost's awards for Innovations in Teaching. The authors, UCL Press and UCL library services would also present papers at national and international library and subject conferences on the difference these textbooks have made to the student/user experience in these subjects.

UHI/ Edinburgh Napier

UHI and Edinburgh Napier's business model minimises the work and costs in the distribution and promotion of any e-textbooks produced. By retailing the publications at a nominal cost the pricing system ensures wide uptake while retaining a very small profit margin that can be re-invested in the preparatory costs for future e-publications, thus contributing towards the sustainability of the process. No reward, monetary or otherwise, has been offered to eTIPS authors and no compensation for their time or work has been provided. All contributors to the first and second eTextbooks work within the resources provided to them by their employer.

The reward to the author(s) is therefore not financial as the retail value having been deliberately set very low. However, the e-textbooks should enhance the reputation of the authors and enable their work to reach a global market of learners. The value to the institution is to have a range of customised core materials for students, and in enhancing the reputation of the institution through the wide distribution of a quality product. The publication process through Amazon enables "other publications" to be grouped around author or imprint and has a peer-referral system for related publications.

Liverpool

For *Using Primary Sources*, the general editor, sub-editor and contributors were paid on publication for their work and chapters and the general editor also received teaching relief to work on the project. For *Essentials of Financial Management*, the author was paid on publication.

Nottingham

Applied ethics: As the department of philosophy are adopting an OER publication model, value to the author and institution will be measured in non-financials. Previous publication of OER e-textbooks at Nottingham have received multiple thousand downloads, providing publication exposure for the authors. In addition to the specific e-textbook publication channels that have been identified already, the text will also be made available in the following high traffic OER sites:

- Jorum
- MERLOT
- OER Commons
- Open CourseWare Consortium
- XPERT

This will further reward the author by expanding the reach of their published work. The institution also gains reward for this open publication model because it supports the institutional objective to expand the amount of OER available to those who, for whatever reason, have no access to formal education.

The motivations of the authors

by Professor Frank Rennie, University of the Highlands and Islands

There was no single motivation to engage with this institutional e-publishing process, but among the range of perceived benefits, the idea of being able to get our own academic ideas available quickly and inexpensively out to students was certainly a key incentive. The motivation to design an effective and flexible method for institutional, in-house e-text production was also a strong factor. A couple of the authors had previously worked with conventional publishers and were disillusioned both by the time taken to produce the books, and by the high retail price of the subsequent products, which were felt to reduce the benefit for students. For both e-textbooks we used a combination of texts which were specifically written for each book, together with a re-working of texts which we had earlier written for other purposes, such as course handouts or website resources for students on our modules. There was a secondary motivation to be able to re-purpose earlier work in a new and more accessible format. For the second book we wanted to experiment with bringing together a small group of academics from different disciplines and with different experiences, in order to create a textbook which had a greater scope and applicability than the views of a single author. Once the preferred authors had been selected, from different parts of the university, we facilitated two “writers’ sprints”. These were one-day-long working sessions during which the team clarified the individual contributions of each author, established how these would relate to other authors’ texts, and then set to work with our laptops in different corners of the room to collate, edit, and generate our respective chapters. Although this did not produce the final version of the draft chapters, it substantially speeded the process along, and the group interaction with colleagues whom we knew but rarely directly worked with, was an unexpected but

significant bonus motivation in the production process. We would certainly repeat this methodology for future books, reports, and papers.

An early motivation in the e-textbook production process was the perception of enhanced participant control of the production process, and though this was realised, it comes with a caveat. While the small, tight-knit group involved in the project did enable individuals to intervene to influence the appearance of the final product, this also created a slight drag on the production process and could have been avoided with greater streamlined decision-making. We realised during the process that it is not desirable for everybody to have an equal say in every aspect of production, and this has resulted in a clearer flow-chart of activities, decision-making, and responsibilities which will be utilised in the institutional production of future e-texts.

It is probably also worth mentioning aspects which were not key motivational factors. None of the authors gave any real consideration to gaining any income from either of the publications, although this might be a consideration for future authors and future publications. The key motivation was to have the opportunity to disseminate our academic ideas, perhaps to be able to use these e-textbooks with our own students, and to keep the retail price down as much as possible in order to reach as many students as possible. In each of these initial motivations, the team is very satisfied with the outcomes. Neither was the “fame” element given much consideration, although with the success of the first e-book gaining so much attention in a global market, there was certainly a motivational stimulus to know that the products were of much greater significance than simply for internal use. Working through the production processes of peer-review, proofreading, and design was a rewarding exercise in itself, and this has in turn produced a motivation to explore other topics and forms of academic textual output. There is an appetite among the staff who engaged with this project, and also with other academic colleagues in this university and in partner institutions, to identify further opportunities to experiment with different authors, topics, and academic formats to produce more institutional e-publications.