**Appendix A**

Some important comments gathered from the *OERScout* test users.

|  |
| --- |
| **1. User interface** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| The user interface is quite simple, friendly, intuitive, un-cluttered and easy to operate. *Adding a few extra prompts would make the user-manual almost redundant.* *The user interface was excellent as it avoids the hassle of a conventional search engine - shifting between standard search and advanced search.* *It is simple enough for even the first time user.**Easily to upgrade/ move to web-based environment in near future.* | Add advanced query tools such as year, language, author, type of resources such as movie, pp, course ware, curricula etc. This will be helpful for those wanting to use Boolean logic in searching. Add indication of failure for unsearchable words. |
| **2. “Faceted search” approach which allows users to dynamically generate search results based on suggested and related terms** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| Very useful. Allows one to drill down and focus the search.*I believe the 'faceted search' is the unique advantage of the OERScout. It is useful to narrow search results.**It does help open up more levels of possible targets.**Faceted search is a very good approach to help people quickly have their search result based on suggested and related terms.* | As the number of resources grows the list of suggested and related terms will be quite long. Some limitations need to be applied.*I was searching for Psychology courses and open textbook resources (OER). None of the open textbooks for Psychology that I know about, or could be found in a Google search, appeared as a search result.**I am just curious to know - how would you ensure that OERScout learns the necessary before releasing it to the public?**I found that the search for a general topic (I used 'statistics') results in quite unfamiliar terms.* |
| **3. Ease of use** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *The OER Scout is extremely useful to locate the OER resources. It will be a powerful OER search engine when the OER indexed resources become abundant.**The search features function as described based on the limited indexing available for the prototype testing.**Extremely simple and straightforward.**The OERScout was definitely easy to use. It was a good idea to separate the suggested terms and related terms boxes.**The response is swift enough and initial findings are usually relevant.*  | *Excellent in principle, limited in indexed resources.**The desirability index does not really match my own target. E.g. format is another important parameter - whether the OER is in PDF, HTML, Mobi or epub formats should be a critical determinant.* |
| **4. Relevance of the suggested terms generated according to the search query** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *Suggested terms so far are quite relevant to the subject of query*.*Yes, the suggested terms seemed to cover the scope of search adequately.**Provides a way out when in doubt.* | *…many of the suggested terms are not what I am familiar with. Some words are stuck together - there is no delimiter separating two terms. Some terms are repeated.**They are useful hints and leads for my further search. But I may do the same myself with Google search to narrow the scope and obtain more accurate outcomes.* |
| **5. Use of related terms to effectively zero-in on the resources being searched for** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *Very useful and the feature performs very well as expected.**The feature is useful to have as it functions like a thesaurus. This is a necessary feature found in online cataloguing tools used by librarians to locate for clues or other suitable words when he/ she is classifying a difficult book. Good that the function is exposed.* | *The data set is too small to properly comment on this aspect. Many of the related terms ended up pointing to the same resource. Once a larger amount of data in indexed, the usefulness of the Related Terms will become apparent.**Related terms were a mix of closely "related" and what seemed like "off the map" terms.**When I selected one of the related terms it appears to give different results from the inquired topic.**It generated far too many terms and could take users a long time to pick and try them out.* |
| **6. Usefulness of the resources returned as search results with respect to Openness (the ability to use, reuse, revise and remix)** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *The license scheme is useful to provide prior knowledge about the resources.**The resources that were identified in the search met the criteria for openness. Most were clearly identified with a CC license type.**I expect the Scout will continue to increase in value as OER resources available on the web grow in both quantity and quality.**Beside providing “traditional” information like title and URL address, the search results provide us information on Desirability, Resource Type and especially content’s license which is useful to know exactly how open of the material.* | *Most users will be familiar with the CC licensing terminology. However, if each returned item were to be labeled with plain English terms as above, it would be more useful.* |
| **7. Usefulness of the resources returned as search results with respect to Access (the ease of reuse and remix with respect to resource type)** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *The resources that were identified in the search met the criteria for openness, use and reuse. Remix is still much harder to judge without digging deeply.**Based on resource type information, people know exactly what they can do with the search results and they can then actively use them, reuse and remix easily.* | *That would not be important as it might refer to the license scheme. Whatever the resource type the license scheme will govern the reusing and re-purposing.**I don’t quite understand the question. How is this different from Openness since the search results are usually CCBY - at least, for the searches that I have done.* |
| **8. Usefulness of the resources returned as search results with respect to Relevance (the match between the results and your query)** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *The relevance is currently quite accurate and it is very useful.* | *I was unable to use this feature since your repository has a very small amount of resources.**Fairly accurate. Again, the small data set limits the ability to comment properly.* *Based on the resources I viewed, they were relevant. However, there would need to be many resources listed from search results to truly provide a variety of offerings from which to select.* |
| **9. Effectiveness of with respect to identifying the academic domain(s) of a resource** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *The academic domain is commonly related to the quality. By knowing this in advance would ease to locate the more qualified resources.**Certainly effective as results will be more focused.**…I can get it at the first glance without going into the link. This certainly helps.**Autonomously identifying the academic domain(s) of a resource is very helpful.* | *The search engine shows promise, but it would need to index many repositories to cover the breadth of potential users.* |
| **10. Use of the *Desirability* framework for filtering the most useful resources for ones needs** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *The Desirability framework is a great idea…. More results are needed in resource lists returned from searchers to be able to truly judge the potential of this methodology.**I find this framework interesting, and certainly useful in identifying resources appropriate to our needs.* | *I had to read the manual to find out how the desirability was calculated and what it meant. Perhaps these terms could have tooltips associated with them on the OERScout screen.**I worry about its filtering function as I was able to locate more resources with Google than the Scout.*  |
| **11. Effectiveness with respect to locating Desirable resources in comparison to mainstream search engines such as Google, Yahoo! or Bing** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *Personally, I dont think there is a need for comparison. The mainstream search engines results in a variety of resources ranging from most useful to least useful. The OERScout, on the other hand, results in only OER resources. I believe each has their own unique advantages.**What the Scout is put to (it's intended use) is not available from any of the other search engines.**OERScout provides another approach of searching information besides using traditional tools. This approach is more focus on the desire of people.* | *Your tools has a great potential, but I am not able to compare since Google has much more resources available**The Google search results were much more effective at this stage in the development of OER Scout.**Cannot comment at this time because of the huge disparity between the data sets used by the search engines under comparison. Once the data set grows, the effectiveness will become apparent.* |
| **12. The effectiveness with respect to locating Desirable resources in comparison to native search engines of OER repositories** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *I believe they are designed to serve different search objectives and will not yield meaningful comparison.**The overall approach is very effective. My searches using the standard search engines have been far from satisfactory.**Personally, I find OERScout rather easy to use in terms of searching for relevant resources. The advantage is definitely for novice users. Users who are new to literature search will find the relevant terms to be very useful as it provides them with a larger scope of search without getting distracted in the process (which is usually the case with conventional search engine).* | *OER Scout is limited by its range of indexed sources. If it indexed all available open repositories, then a viable side-by-side comparison could be made.**It needs further enhancement.* |
| **13. Innovativeness of the technology framework** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *I like the idea that all OER repositories could use any standards and be searched by this type of engine.**This is a promising direction, and one that uses a clear and supportable framework for discriminating between open resources, based on "desirability."* *The simplicity of the interface somewhat hides the huge innovation that has gone into the design process. I would rank it very highly.**Definitely innovative! I would like to see/test the OERScout with a larger group of audience - to test the learning algorithm.**It is a new approach in searching for OER.**It is a much better tool. The precision is better.* | *I think it can work, but not without a larger index of available resources.**The scope needs to be refined.**The technology framework is quite OK; however, it would be much better if it is a SaaS Architecture so that OERScout could be scaled up easily* |
| **14. How the wider OER community will be benefited** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *OER Scout will benefit the wider OER community as a tool for provoking discussion about desirability and workflows for finding, adopting, and adapting available open resources.**Highly useful for people needing such function provided by the Scout. However, the question of benefit ties in closely on the benefit of the OER materials which is beyond the Scout function.**Certainly; particularly for novice users. Again, I believe this depends largely on the effectiveness of the learning algorithm.**Yes, it works differently from other search engines. The focus is on OERs only**The OER community is diverse from individual, institution to government. I thought OERScout might be affordable to individuals.* | *Not at the moment. It appears to have missed quite an amount of resources.* |
| **15. Why recommend OERScout to the wider OER community** |
| **Advantages of OERScout** | **Weaknesses of the Prototype** |
| *I will highly recommend it as a very useful tool when developing a particular OER material.**I will surely recommend OERScout to the wider OER community. My novice course writers will find it very useful considering the hassle-free interface and ease of use on the suggested terms and related terms.**Will do if the searcher has no time for browsing and wants to find OERs.**Yes, definitely. OERScout help individuals targeting their OER resources quicker.*  | *Right now, it feels like a prototype, not a tool.**The indexed data set needs to increase substantially, though, before it becomes the search engine of choice by the OER community.* *It would be much better if, beside the OERScout results, OERScout brings up searching results from other search engine as well. Because, the user might interested in both OER and Non-OER and he/she don’t want to switch back and forth from OERScout to Google/Bing/Yahoo.* |