E-Learning and Open Initiatives: Opportunities and Challenges for Cooperatives

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Co-ops have common traits with 3 new developments in e-learning:

- Free/Open Source Software (FOSS) – software with code that can be freely distributed and modified by anyone
- Open Hardware – computers with plans that are freely distributed and can be freely used or modified
- Open Courseware – learning content that are freely shared

What are the similarities with co-ops?

- Self-help as the goal
- Emphasis on service instead of profit-taking (free distribution/use of intellectual property instead of paid/exclusive use) enables the common man to use low-cost computing resources for his own benefit
- The proponent community is open for joining by volunteer user-contributors
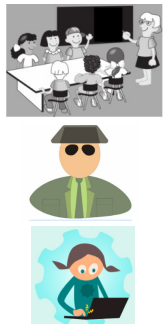- Creating business for selling derived products or services is possible

What are the example products of these open initiatives?

- Linux, the free operating system, and many other FOSS software like Firefox, LibreOffice
- Raspberry Pi, the $35 computer; also the new Android TV/PC sticks
- MIT Open Courseware; Khan Academy videos

What user groups are likely to benefit?

- Basic education – the large K-12 population, especially in developing nations
- The co-operative education programs
- The co-ops computerizing their operations

How should co-ops get started?

- Use and then contribute to the development of (1) software, (2) computer hardware, (3) content
- Treat e-learning/education programs as business opportunities

Watch these open initiative videos:

- About Free/Open Source Software
  http://youtu.be/dIZe3zJmJlg

- About Open Hardware
  http://youtu.be/FgaGZyp5M8Y

- MIT OpenCourseWare
  http://youtu.be/5N46j5C5Rag

- About Khan Academy (CBSNewsOnline)
  http://youtu.be/zxJgPHM5NYI