



Rolfe V (2011). Raising the profile of Bioscience Open Educational Resources (OERs) on the Web. Proceedings of the Effective Learning in the Biosciences Conference. June 30 – July 1 2011, Edinburgh UK

OER projects “Virtual Analytical Laboratory” (VAL, 1) (part of the “Bioscience Laboratory Field Work Manual”) and “Sickle Cell Open” (SCOOTER, 2) have released many OERs onto the internet. These resources are for academic use, and are also openly available to students to enhance their educational experience. As OER numbers escalate, those releasing them need to promote discoverability. Search engine optimisation (SEO) is a technique for enhancing website discoverability, and this abstract compares the performances of sites undergoing SEO (SCOOTER) or not (VAL).

There are three sources of web traffic; direct from knowing the URL; visits from a referring site, and organic traffic or people who visit by searching. To gain organic traffic a site needs to rank high in Google and will need regular new content, optimised keywords and back-links. The performances of SCOOTER and VAL were compared from their launches through their first 10 weeks on the web using Google Analytics. Table 1 summarises the SEO techniques and Table 2 summarises the results.

Table 1: SEO Techniques		
SEO Technique	VAL	SCOOTER
Keyword optimised	No	Yes
Back-links	Random occurrence	Active strategy
New content	Irregular	Weekly
Community building	No online networking	Twitter, Posterous, Facebook, Ezine, Other.

Table 2: Performance Results		
Parameter	VAL	SCOOTER
Time frame	Sept – Nov 2008	Nov – Jan 2011
Direct traffic	92%	34%
Organic traffic	8%	27%
Referrals	0%	39%
Number of visits	150	365
Av. Page views per visit	1.47	3.66
Av. Time on site	32 s	3 mins 35 s

To conclude, using a website and SEO techniques can greatly enhance the discoverability of OERs and thus maximise their use by staff and students. Further research will not only determine the “reach” but also the “impact” that these resources have.

References

- 1 Virtual Analytical Laboratory (VAL). Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/oerval>
- 2 [Sickle Cell Anaemia](http://www.sicklecellanaemia.org) (SCOOTER). Available at: <http://www.sicklecellanaemia.org>