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September 10, 2013 by [Steve Kolowich](#)

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Google and edX Create a MOOC Site for the Rest of Us

Until now, massive open online courses have mostly reinforced existing hierarchies in higher education. MOOC providers have recruited elite institutions and offered them and their professors the opportunity to broadcast their courses to the world.

But now edX, a nonprofit provider founded by Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is joining forces with Google to create a spinoff Web site where ordinary folks—and professors at colleges that have not been invited to join high-profile MOOC consortiums—can not only sign up for a MOOC but also build one themselves.

The new site, [MOOC.org](#), will provide tools and a platform that “will allow any academic institution, business, and individual to create and host online courses,” says a blog post by Dan Clancy, a research director at Google. In an interview, Anant Agarwal, president of edX, referred to the site as a “YouTube for courses.”

As such, MOOC.org is likely to be more freewheeling than edX proper. The new site is similar, perhaps, to Udemy—which also welcomes anyone, professor or otherwise, to teach a course on its platform. Mr. Agarwal said it had not yet been determined whether edX would keep MOOC.org courses free of misinformation and copyrighted material (the latter having been a big problem for YouTube itself).

Previously, Google tried online education with Course Builder, a free tool for building MOOCs; the company plans to fold that project into MOOC.org, which will live on Google servers. The company has pledged to devote its development expertise to MOOC.org’s open-source platform, which will be called Open edX.

Like those of other MOOCs, offerings on MOOC.org will yield a trove of data describing how learners are interacting with course materials. Google and edX “will collaborate on research into how students learn and how technology can transform learning and teaching,” says a news release. But edX alone will own the data generated by the courses, said Mr. Agarwal.

“EdX has control of how the data is being used and shared, and edX will definitely do the right thing by those data on the site,” he said. Details of what kind of access Google will have to learner data “are not worked out,” he added.

EdX is still searching for ways to generate revenue streams that will enable it to become financially self-sustaining. “We want to be able to monetize MOOC.org much the same as how we want to monetize edX,” said Mr. Agarwal. “But specifically how we want to monetize MOOC.org is TBD.”

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